IN UNITY

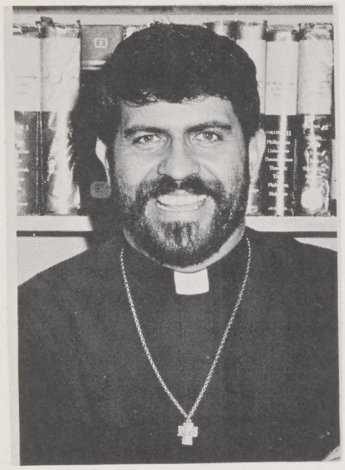
August 1976

GENERAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM ISSUE:

"Proclaim Liberation In The Land"

Lev.25:10

The News and Opinion Journal
of the
Universal Fellowship
of
Metropolitan Community Churches



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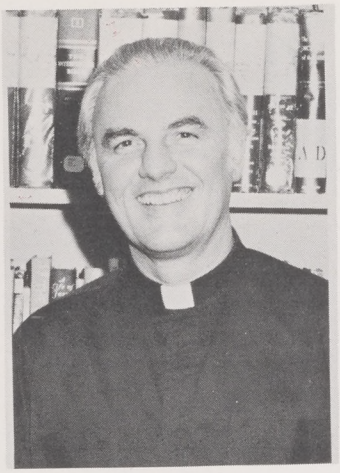
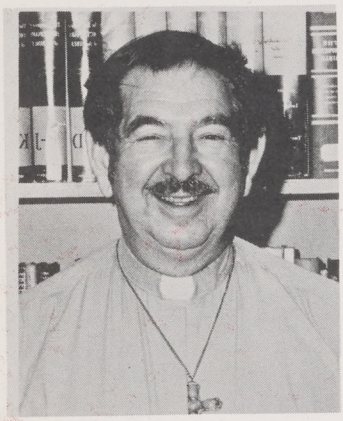
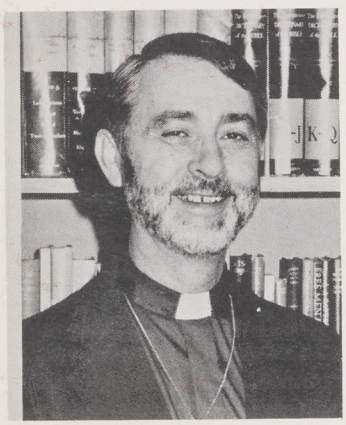


Rev. Elder James Sandmire

Rev. Elder Freda Smith

Rev. Elder Carol Cureton





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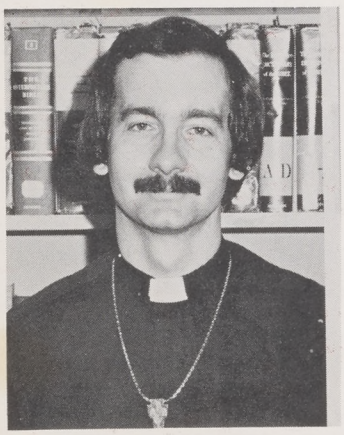

Rev. Elder John Gill

"Proclaim Liberation In The Land"

Leviticus 25:10

Queridos; Hermanos y Hermanas

Con nuestros corazones llenos de dicha damos al bienvenida a todos ustedes a la Septima Conferencia Anual de la Congregacion Universal de la Comunidad de Iglesias Metropolitians. Es un ano en que todos podemos senalar con orgullo. Los esfuerzos logrados por nuestros congregaciones.

Demos Gracias a Dios.

Damos especialmente la bienvenida a todos ustedes hermanos y hermannas quienes no viven aqui en los Estados Unidos de NorteAmerica El Consejo Directivo Internacional sabe el sacrificio de ustedes, quienes vienen de tan lejos para asistir a esta conferencia y aquellos de nosotros que somos NorteAmericanos les desenmos que vuestra estancia en este pais les sea agradable y que la pasen muy feliz. Como probablemente saben, los Estados Unidos de NOrteAmerica estan celebrando el Bicentenario de su Independecia. La Mesa Directiva selecciono a la ciudad de Washington, D.C. como el lugar para la Conferencia General de este ano, para que ustedes tengan la oportunidad de compartir con nosotros la celebracion de este Aniversario que sola-

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Dear brothers and sisters,

It is with real joy in our hearts that the board of elders welcomes all of you to the Seventh Annual General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. It is a year that all of us can point to with pride, to the accomplishments made by our denomination. We give God the praise.

We especially welcome all of you brothers and sisters who are here from outside the United States of America. The board of elders is aware of the sacrifice you, who have come from so far, have made in order to attend this meeting. Those of us who are Americans hope that your stay in this country will be pleasant and happy. As you probably know, America is celebrating its Bicentennial. The board of elders picked Washington, DC as the location for General Conference this year, so that you might have the opportunity to share with us this once-in-a-lifetime anniversary. Again, we hope you enjoy your stay in this country.

To all brothers and sisters in attendance here, the board of elders hopes that this General Conference will go down in our Church's history as one of the most spirit-filled conferences to date. It will be that if we all yield ourselves to the moving of the Holy Spirit. If we have come to General Conference expecting God to bless us, then that will happen.

Perhaps the Prophet Isaiah could see the day in which we live, and knew the work God has given Metropolitan Community Church to do, and that in these last days the Lord would be bringing revival to the community in which we work. Isiah cried, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people;

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INSIDE IN UNITY

THE PROPHET and THE MINISTRY

AN EDITORIAL BY
RICHARD R. MICKLEY

IN UNITY is a ministry of the word. The Publications Department is a ministry of the Word. Printed as well as spoken, the ministry of the Word is an important work of the church. But not the only work. Part of its work is to give testimony to the other essential works of the church.

The 64 pages of this general conference issue of IN UNITY are a printed testimony of the wide diversity of the ministry of MCC "so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Chirst." (Eph 4:12)

Pastors and people build up the Body of Christ by forming together a community which has all three of the essential elements of a church – a worshipping fellowship, a witnessing fellowship, a working-serving fellowship. Without all three, without a balance, there is no church (no matter what it calls itself).

So also the Fellowship as a whole has a diversity of ministries for building up the Body of Christ.

Rev. Larry Bernier has a valid ministry of Art, tastefully presenting the Word and testimonies of God's servants in the pages of IN UNITY, the Hymn Book, etc.

Rev. Jeff Pulling along with Karen Wheeler and many others has a valid ministry of the Word in the education of our future ministers in Samaritan Theological Institute.

The national prison ministry was established by the general conference to be a ministry of Word and sacrament and service to women and men in prisons.

Rev. Bud Bunce in his deep dedication to serving God's people in prison ministry, along with Rev. Tere Roderick, Rev. Bob Arthur, Norm Flowers and scores of others, bring this Fellowship a valid ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

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The Rev. Richard Mickley, Editor of IN UNITY, consults with UFMCC General Moderator Rev. Troy Perry on the preparation of this conference issue of IN UNITY.

EL PROFETA y EL MINISTERIO

IN UNITY es un Ministerio de la palabra. El Departamento de Publicaciones es un Ministerio de la palabra. Lo Publicado como lo Hablado, El Ministerio de la palabra es un trabajo importante de la Iglesia.

Pero no solamente es trabajo. Parte de este trabajo es dar testimonios para los otros trabajos esenciales de la Iglesia.

Las 64 paginas obre el tema de la Conferencia General que constituyen este volumen de IN UNITY fueron una publicacion y testificacion de la amplia diversidad de ministerio de MCC, "para que los santos juntos hagan una unidad en el trabajo, y el servicio de construir el cuerpo de Cristo" (Eph 4:12)).

Los pastores y las personas construyen el cuerpo de Cristo formando juntos una comunidad que tiene los tres elementos esenciales de una Iglesia: sociedad-testificando, sociedad-trabajando y sirviendo a la sociedad. Ahora sin estos tres elementos esenciales no habria balance, no habria Iglesia. (Sin importar que nombre use ella misma.)

Tambien la Hermandad (Universal

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IN UNITY

The News and Opinion Journal of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

Volume VI, Number 4 July / August, 1976

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Lenten Series Praised

Enthusiastic comments have been received from many of the more than thirty congregations and study groups which received the materials for the Lenten Living Room Groups. Obviously the experience "worked" in both large and small congregations.

What are the Lenten Living Room Groups? Earl Miller from MCC St. Louis gives a rather complete picture in an article in the MCC St. Louis *The Lamplighter*. "This year I am looking forward to Easter more than ever. You see, this year I am involved in a Lenten Group at MCC. You might ask: 'What's so special about Lenten Groups?' Well, I'll tell you. The Lenten Groups gather in each other's homes for a few hours each week, read Scripture, study the lessons contained in it, pray, discuss problems, joys, and life. It is a wonderful time of sharing and rejoicing in the Love of the Lord. The Lenten Group has given me a spiritual renewal, a feeling of compassion and a genuine appreciation of the true meaning of Easter. I'm already looking forward to next year."

The Elders have scheduled two identical workshops on small groups at the General Conference in Washington this year. There, the churches who used the Lenten program will be able to share their experiences and the churches who are wanting to explore the possibilities of using such a program for Lent of 1977 can find out about the Lenten program.

Here are some comments from some of our churches and study groups around the world which used the program.

From Steven Quesnel of Albuquerque, "The growth noted among the participants has been exciting to me, as an Exhorter. Many of the discussions opened new channels of thought to the participants...With definite answers to about 80% of our prayers (including a resounding 'NO!' to one of mine), the members of the group are busy telling others that prayers in group manner are re-enforced and much more effective. On the basis of what we experienced this year, I am sure that the second series will be more than welcome next year."

From the Rev. Charlie Arehart, Denver, "Those involved grew spiritually and a lot closer to each other. Thanks. We're looking forward to next year!"

From the Rev. Tom Begelow, London, "We have started a new project of neighborhood outreach meetings. We are going to use the materials at these and I will let you know about the outcome."

The Rev. Joseph Gilbert of Providence writes, "It is an excellent program. It has been the lynch-pin of the growth here...I want to say thank you for myself and for both Providence and Worcester.

"Twelve men and women were involved in the pre-Lenten leadership training phase. Beginning Ash Wednesday three groups met weekly through Lent. It is expected that two firm families will come into being from the experience to provide some modeling for other families to come into being. These families will join an already existing residential family, Resurrection House, to provide modeling leadership. The Lenten Groups have provided us with the tools we needed to grow toward the family-ness of the primitive Christian Church."

Marilyn Marr of St. Louis writes, "MCC St. Louis has been truly blessed with our Lenten Family Groups. We instituted the Lenten series using the existing family groups as well as set up three additional groups. The total number of people involved was 68. Training sessions for the 21 would-be leaders were divided into three groups... The response was good...We were able to involve some people in church who had never before given of their time and talent."

This year, the congregation of MCCLA developed a second series for Lent. There were more than 225 registered for the 19 Lenten groups. Those churches which have used the materials from the first year will be able to draw on the MCCLA 1976 Lenten materials for Lent of 1977. In many ways, the materials developed for the second year were improved because of the experience of the first year.

It is planned to again make the Lenten materials available to any churches or study groups that may wish to use them for Lent of 1977. Inquiries can be sent to the Rev. Jim Glyer, 1902 N. Marianna Ave., No. 101, Los Angeles CA 90032.

(Above and below) Two Lenten Living-room Groups from MCC Providence, RI

(Above) The Hermosa Family (Below) The New Hope Family — Groups from MCC St. Louis, MO

(Below) Lenten Group meeting in San Pedro, CA

(Below) Lenten Group meeting in Los Angeles, CA

MCC MEMBER PUBLISHES COUNSELING GUIDE

by Rev. Jay Thomas,
Great Lakes District Coordinator

Exhorter Barb Culver's counseling skill and her ability to establish "rapport" with many whom I could in no way reach made her almost irreplaceable in MCC Cincinnati counseling services. Her skill was innate only in part. It has been much refined by her formal study and work experience. She holds a B.S. degree in education and has additional graduate level study in psychology and in TA workshops. Since graduation in 1972 she has worked for the Cincinnati Mental Health Institute and has, for the past two years, done tutoring for "learning disability" students in the Cincinnati Public Schools. All this – and she still has over three hundred hours of counseling service time for Cincinnati MCC.

Because of the need to provide training for other Cincinnati pastoral staff personnel, Barb developed *Getting It Together*, as she calls it. This study training manual is a guide for helping us to help others realize their potential "living level." The twenty (20) two-hour lessons are designed to be presented to small groups of six or fewer.

Rev. Elder Freda Smith says, "At Last. In answer to the combined prayers of many MCC Ministers, a manual for counseling has emerged. Concrete, constructive, and capable of being used to advantage by ministers and staff, this concise manual bridges the gap between the need in our churches for counseling and the lack of conventionally trained counselors to meet that need.

"Utilizing the concepts of Transactional Analysis (TA), a form of counseling in unique conformity with Christian principles, the author outlines the procedure for leading persons into a self-awareness where they can perceive more accurately, understand more completely, and cope more effectively with their life situations.

"This counseling manual is a must for ministers."

Getting It Together will be on sale at General Conference in Washington or may be purchased by writing Barb Culver, POB 39235, Cincinnati, OH 45239. The cost of this copyrighted material is $5.00 for an individual copy or $3.50 in lots of five or more.

I Am The Pastor's Spouse

by Gail E. Zadakis

I've fallen in love with someone who just happens to be a minister of the Gospel.

Of all the vocations in the universe, why is it that my lover chose the ministry of serving God's people? Sometimes I think I should try to convince this person to change jobs; but, I run into difficulty with my lover's employer. You see, this job was not chosen at all. It was accepted when the lord called.

There are times I feel God has called me as a special sub-minister, or – a minister's minister. I'm my pastor's most vocal critic. Seemingly, I'm sometimes my pastor's only friend. A lot of times, I don't know who or what I am.

People tend to forget that it's not I who is the pastor. Often I'm no one. My name is seldom used in introductions. My new names include "Minister's spouse, Minister's lover, Minister's wife, Minister's husband. On rare occassions, my given name is used and the above names are used as a last name instead. I am the Pastor's spouse.

Once in awhile I cuss. Sometimes I get a bit tipsy if I drink too much. I even smoke! I like to flirt and go so far as to go out with someone occasionally. Sometimes I don't attend a church service. I am not scorned upon because few even know who I am. The scorn is upon the Pastor's spouse.

Every so often, there's a sermon given regarding tithing. My lover is supposed to be supported by the Christian generosity of our small congregation. Ah, but the Pastor's spouse has a job so the spouse can support the Pastor. To be able to serve God's children, the Pastor should not have to be moonlighting for a living. Since I, the spouse, am providing the Pastor's material needs anyway, the Pastor shouldn't have to work except as a minister. And tithing remains extremely low because people can't why they should give and have to support someone I can support. So, the Pastor doesn't take *any* salary because the money is needed for other church business. The Pastor is God's employee. Why is it that I seem to be the payroll distributor.

Often my lover is invited to various meetings. Invited. Perhaps that should read: expected. Our interests vary a great deal and often I don't want to sit in on a meeting. So, I decline the invitation which has been extended to both of us. My lover respects our individuality. So do I. Then the phone rings: "You should have attended the meeting. What are people going to think if you, the minister's spouse, aren't totally involved? You've got to start coming to more meetings – to set an example. You're the Pastor's spouse."

And there are the times I break my neck trying to answer the phone when the Pastor is out because I know from experience that each call could be someon begging for answers. And I'm told that they'll call back when the minister is home. No other message, no other conversation. I'm only the Pastor's spouse.

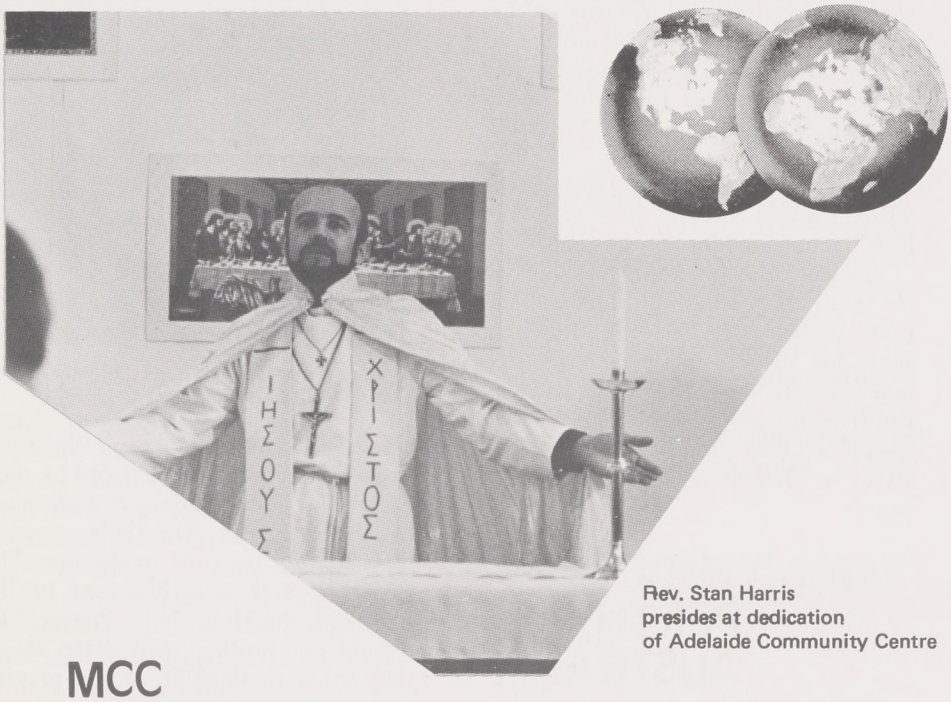
There are the times of kicking back and having a good time with friends. Times when everyone is relaxed, laughing, joking and even being a bit rowdy. My lover sits in to join us and tenseness clouds over the group. Everyone begins to mellow and reword their type of language. Someone begins a story and it's great – until they slip on a word, interrupt themselves with a "oops, sorry Reverend" then continue, while the two of us feel we are alienating everyone by our presence.

At times I feel like we both wear collars. Mine isn't white or even visible at all for that matter. I await the day when someone's going to pat me on the head and ask my lover, "Is it yours? Such a cute, well-trained little critter." With luck, they might even ask what my name is.

When I ask myself if it's all worth it, I get pretty choked up because I know it most certainly is! After all, God is Love and I've been blessed with the ability to both give and receive that Love. I've also been blessed with meeting so many Christian brothers and sisters; many of whom I'd probably never have met if I had fallen in love with a – mortician for example.

My needs and wants are few and I try not to ask for more than I do not need. From you, I only ask that you accept us as humans, on an individual basis. From God, I only ask to be loved and guided and someday given a home in heaven. NOT *just because* I am the Pastor's spouse.

The Church Around The World



Rev. Stan Harris presides at dedication of Adelaide Community Centre

MCC ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

As Pastor Stan Harris and Exhorter Renee Hein prepare to attend General Conference in Washington, they are still rejoicing about the opening of Australia's first Gay Community Centre at MCC Adelaide and about the chartering of MCC Adelaide as Australia's third chartered Church, after Sydney and Melbourne.

MCC Adelaide was chartered on Sunday July 18, 1976.

On his departure for General Conference, Rev. Harris said, "We would like to let everyone know that Australia is pulling its weight. We would like to raise the consciousness of our American sisters and brothers to an international understanding of the Universal Fellowship of MCC."

He also stated, "Our cultures are vastly different in many ways, yet there is so much we can share and learn from each other as we grow in the Lord."

In May Rev. Harris, who is assistant district coordinator in Australia, and pastor of MCC Adelaide, officially opened and dedicated South Australia's first Gay Community Centre.

The Centre is in the heart of the city, and consists of two attached cottages. With the combined efforts of Church members and individual gay women and men, who for six weeks, mixed concrete, repaired windows, plastered walls, painted, swung picks and shovels, the property was made habitable.

The Chapel social hall completed, the other side of the building will be used as a coffee shop, offices, bookshop, counselling area, etc., as soon as more funds can be raised to furnish it.

On May 23rd the Chapel was dedicated by Rev. Harris, assisted by Rev. Art Cazeault, pastor of MCC Melbourne, and Rev. Peter Alexander-Smith, assistant pastor, MCC Sydney.

The Liberal Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Australia attended. There were also representatives of the Uniting Church, which had provided a church home for the MCC congregation up till this time.

Liturgically, Adelaide excelled itself with choruses, candles, incense, tambourines (as always). Altar cloths and vessels were donated by members of the congregation. A specially designed corporal was presented by the Rev. Art Cazeault who embroidered it himself, depicting the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, surrounded by tongues of fire.

The Chapel and social hall combination seats 100 quite comfortably, so that it can be used for meetings and lectures as well as for worship. On the patio, barbecues can be held in conjunction with the coffee shop.

MCC is a world-wide Fellowship. As we gather in General Conference, more than ever before we are aware of the international character of this church.

The addition of a new study group in South Africa brings the number of officially recognized congregations outside the United States to a total of 13, which is a phenomenal 12% The Fellowship - - in seven years.

We are devoting the following pages to our churches outside the United States to help us become conscious not only that we have sisters and brothers everywhere, but to the extent that it is possible, that we may get to know them personally.

In the words of Louise Leopold of MCC Washington, D.C., "One look at the Universal Fellowship attests to the wonderful feeling that we are growing, that we are brothers and sisters without boundaries. Let us remember our international brothers and sisters and give them an especially warm welcome when they arrive in Washington, DC for this General Conference.

Exhorter Rene Hein sings at dedication of new Community Center in Adelaide, Australia

MCC BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

The Reverend Jan Weymouth will assume the pastorate of MCC Brisbane immediately on her return from General Conference.

Ms. Weymouth, who has been Pastor of the MCC Study Group at the Gold Coast (Australia's most popular tourist resort, near Brisbane) since last December, is the only licensed woman minister of MCC outside the United States.

Rev. Jan was present on Sunday June 6 at a special service in Brisbane to mark culmination of 18 months' work by the local Study Group to achieve Mission status.

At the evening service, held in the Friend's Meeting House, in the Brisbane suburb of Kelvin Grove, the Reverend Lee J. Carlton, Coordinator for Church Extension in Australia (well known as the ex-Pastor of Los Angeles MCC in the U.S.), conferred the document of Mission status to MCC Brisbane. Rev. Carlton also presented Brisbane's Worship Coordinator, Mr. Gerry Smith, with a documented testimonial commending his 12 months of devoted service and leadership.

In a special sermon, Reverend Carlton urged all members of Australia's newest MCC Mission to embrace full commission to the work of God and to bring the spirit of love back into Christianity.

"For too long," he said, "gay people and other minority groups had been kept separate from the Body of Christ." He referred to the parables of lost sheep and the lost coin to demonstrate that Christ wants those who are in his safekeeping to seek out and reclaim his lost children.

The week prior to the Mission Status Service was spent by the MCC members in engaging in a number of activities both to deepen their own spiritual awareness and also to bring their work under the attention of the Christian community in general.

On Wednesday evening a mid-week Communtion Service and discussion was held at the Worship Coordinator's home. On Thursday the usual counselling class was held by Rev. Jan Weymouth. These classes are held every two weeks for members of MCC and other gay organizations involved in various types of voluntary social work.

On Friday a group of MCC people, led by Rev. Jan and Gerry Smith, met with the joint Methodist-Presbyterian-Congregational Commission on Homosexuality at Cromwell College in the University of Queensland. As a result of the open and friendly dialogue of that night a member of the Commission attended the Mission service and has had subsequent meetings with MCC members, all of which have helped to break down the barriers between "us" and "them". "How the devil must writhe when Christians agree to agree and love" commented Mr. Smith.

Brisbane Mission now steps out on the path that will lead, we trust and pray, to being a Chartered Church in time for district conference in Melbourne, come New Year 1977, and love can have no greater expression than to spend a long weekend (Australian style) in Melbourne, rather than Brisbane.

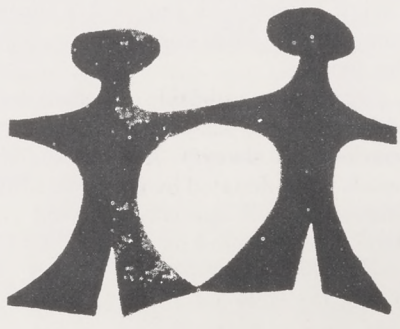
MCC PERTH, AUSTRALIA

Recently, the eighth MCC congregation in Australia was established on the far side of the continent of Australia, in Western Australia in the city of Perth.

Rev. Carlton visited Perth, spoke at a Conference and participated in a number of worships on subjects varying from feminism to religion.

Some 15 people attended a worship service celebrated by Rev. Carlton who urged in his sermon "appreciate yourself as God's own creation."

While in Perth, Rev. Carlton met with clergy of several denominations and representatives from the World Council of Churches.



MCC GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA

Brother Norm Thoday will serve as Gold Coast Worship Coordinator

During Lent, members of the Gold Coast congregation, encouraged by their pastor, Jan Weymouth, put aside some money each day. On Easter Sunday they brought the total to the altar. The entire amount was then sent to the struggling church in Zaria, Nigeria, "To remind our brothers and sisters there, that we were thinking of and praying for them."

In recent months, General Conference has been on everyboby's minds and lips.

Among those attending will be Norm Thoday, former Worship Coordinator and interim clerk of the Board. Mr. Thoday will again be appointed to the position of Worship Coordinator when Rev. Weymouth leaves to serve as pastor of the MCC mission at Brisbane after General Conference.

Of course, Rev. Jan Weymouth will be attending General Conference. IN UNITY readers will remember the photos and feature story in the March 1976 issue telling of Rev. Jan's licensing as the first woman MCC Minister in Australia.

Mr. Thoday sends this item of interest:

MCC Gold Coast (Australia) recently received a copy of "The Lamplighter" from MCC Illiamo.

Although postmarked in Burlington, IA, and again in New York, the only address showing on arrival was

2539/No. 6

The address of the Church Clerk is Unit 6, 2539 Gold Coast Highway, Mermaid Beach. Queensland 4218.

Good work on the part of the U.S. Postal Service and Australia Post. At least they know where to find MCC.

Anglican Priest Joins MCC Staff in Sydney Australia

After 26 years of service and ministry, Fr. Peter Alexander-Smith has resigned from the Anglican Church to devote his efforts to full-time ministry among gay people.

Mr. Alexander-Smith began his career with the Church of England as Lay Reader with the Mission to Seamen in the U.K. Receiving his theological degree from the Australian College of Theology, he was ordained a priest in 1963 and has served parishes in N.T., Queensland, and most recently St. Francis of Assisi in Adelaide, S.A. It was here that Mr. Alexander-Smith came to terms with his own sexual and emotional orientation.

Speaking of the events leading to his recent decisions, Mr. Alexander-Smith said: "I was alone and desperate to find fulfillment in my life as a minister of Christ and as a gay person. I had heard of MCC and sought out Adelaide Pastor, Rev. Stan Harris. After attending services there and finding people who were not only sincere and dedicated to Christ but full of joy and purpose, I realized how empty life had become and hypocritical I'd been all these years: Living a lie; parroting and internalizing the established churches' view that gay people were either sick sinful, or both.

"With Rev. Harris' help I went to see my Bishop who lovingly told me that it was no problem as long as I remained quiet about it. But, how could I remain quiet when there were hundreds of my sisters and brothers being treated as second-class citizens of my church?

"After months of prayer and soul searching, I decided that my only recourse was to resign from the Anglican Church and petition for acceptance into MCC's ministry. To be sure it was not an easy choice. There were family and financial considerations, as well as the saddening aspect of leaving a church which had taught me so much about God's love; yet had denied my personhood as a healthy part of God's creation. Although the leadership of MCC encouraged me to stay with the Church and foster change, it simply couldn't be done as long as I was prohibited from openly ministering to other gay Christians and living my life as a whole person.

"Upon application to ministry in MCC, I found their requirements for professional ministry even more stiff than most established churches, a position which I appreciate. As Rev. Carlton (the Coordinator of MCC in Australasia) put it to me, 'You might have been a good Anglican pastor but that doesn't mean you'll be a good MCC pastor. MCC endeavours to face life as it is in the world today, not just through stained glass windows. We take Christ's message of liberating love to the gay bars and ghettos; better yet, we meet Christ there, in the face of rejected and often lonely people. Your task, with us, is just that. Wherever people are; there is your church and your call' ".

MCC will consider acceptance of Rev. Alexander-Smith's ordination after a year's commitment as a licensed minister. He has accepted appointment as assistant pastor for the MCC Sydney congregation.

Crisis Center

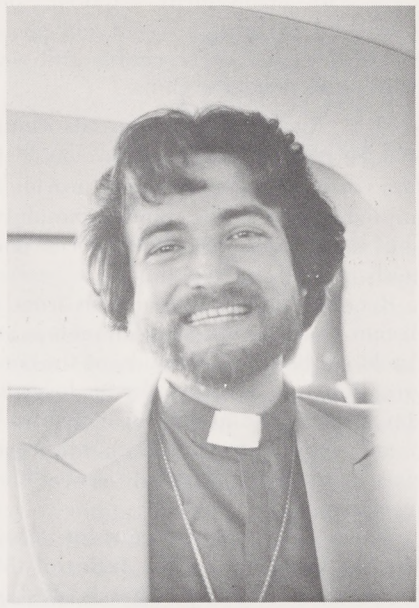
The theme: "Help take the pain out of people's lives."

The help: Gayline. This is a telephone counseling and referring service specifically for gay people operated by members of MCC Sydney, Australia.

They staff the telephones from 10:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. seven days a week, providing understanding and a listening ear, along with referrals to professional help and other needed contacts.

Gayline staffers are trained extensively in a twelve-week program of solid training, and required to pass an examination before being accepted to work at the Gayline office in the MCC Centre.

The five person committee in charge is Chris Ceballos, Dean Butler, Ken Goodenough, Hazel Duel, and Bruce Piper.



Rev. Lee J. Carlton,
Coordinator of Church Extension
in Australasia

Rev. CARLTON VISITS MCC AUCKLAND, New Zealand

A letter from E'in Jackson, Secretary of MCC Auckland, informs us that the Rev. Lee Carlton, Coordinator of Church Extension in Australasia, planned a visit to New Zealand July 20-25 prior to departure for General Conference.

Mr. Jackson sends his regrets that no member of the Auckland congregation will be able to attend General Conference, although he is looking forward to attending the district conference in Australia in January.

A supper and social hour is held each Sunday following the MCC Auckland formal worship service. The Rev. Don Mence, an Anglican priest, generously presides at the worship services for the MCC congregation. They meet for worship in the chapel of St. Matthew's Anglican church by courtesy of the Anglican Bishop of Auckland and the vicar of St. Matthews.

Newsletters from MCC churches around the world are displayed and enjoyed immensely by the Auckland congregation. They have MCC crosses and Lambda shirts for sale.

In their newsletter they urge, "come, join us in our social and religious activ-

ities. No involvement required, but please try to bring a friend and please do rattle your vocal chords and sing with us on Sunday evenings."

MCC Auckland continues its counseling service, joining with the Gay Welfare Group and Gay Cause to provide a unified service to the whole community and save duplication of services and confusion.

Recently a brother came in from a distant town for cancer treatments in an Auckland hospital. Members of the congregation found a place for his lover to stay close to the hospital in a member's home, sent the patient fruit and magazines, provided a radio, and visited him regularly.

While Worship Coordinator Don Mence was ill in May, the pastor of the Northcate Presbyterian Church filled in for the MCC worship service.

After the anti-gay film "Return to Sodom" was shown in Auckland, members of MCC distributed printed letters protesting the film. "Bigotry and prejudice should not be given a free reign," declared D. McMillan, treasurer of the congregation.

The Newsletter of MCC Auckland is distributed to more than 500 people each month.

MCC Auckland is working hard toward becoming a Chartered Church. Some of their members feel it would be helpful to have a minister from the United States to serve them.

AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION to ATTEND CONFERENCE

About 16 people from Australia were scheduled to depart from Australia July 29th to attend the world-wide General Conference of MCC in Washinton, D.C.

The early departure date is planned to give the delegation an opportunity to spend about a week in Los Angeles before proceeding to Washington. Special travel arrangements were made by Mr. Warren Harrison, District Secretary.

The group is being led by the Rev. Lee Carlton, former pastor of MCC Tampa and MCC Los Angeles, present pastor of MCC Sydney, and Coordinator of Church Extension in Australasia.

MELBOURNE VISITORS

The following members of MCC Melbourne are attending the 1976 General Conference in Washington, D.C.

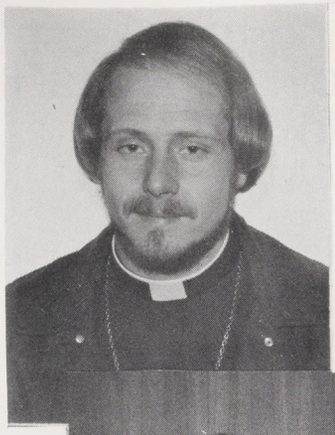
Rev. Arthur R. Cazeault: Born at Providence, R.I., he spent the first twenty-two years of his life as a Roman Catholic, five as a religious monk. He has a degree in Social work/psychology from Providence College and worked as a geriatric social worker before becoming involved with MCC in January, 1973. He is the founding pastor of the MCC at Providence, R.I. Next he served as assistant pastor in MCC Atlanta, Georgia, and is presently senior pastor of MCC Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Mr. Ian M. Tupper: Born in Scotland, United Kingdom, he spent the first twenty years of his life as a Baptist. In September, 1976 he emmigrated to Australia where he pursued a career in hospital work as a plaster technician/orthopedic. In July, 1975 he became involved in MCC Adelaide, South Australia. While at District Conference in January, 1976 he met Rev. Cazeault and moved to Melbourne and they presently share their lives together.

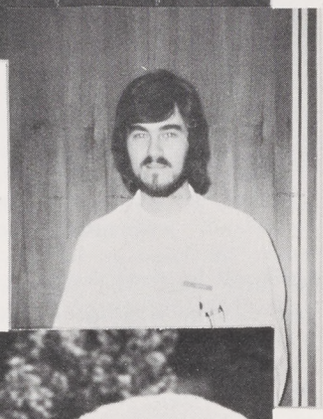
Mr. Bryan Flower: (delegate) Bryan was born in Sydney, New South Wales and became involved in MCC in August, 1975. Since that time he has been an extremely dedicated and active member of the Melbourne congregation. Mr. Flower is an advertising consultant of the highest calibre. He was elected delegate to the General Conference at our annual congregational meeting. He is presently in a ten year relationship with Mr. Brian Davies.

Mr. Brian Davies: Born at Adelaide, South Australia he became involved in MCC in August, 1975 and became a Christian through his involvement. Brian was elected to the Board of Directors at the First Congregational meeting on the day of Chartering and presently serves as treasurer. Mr. Davies works for the Commonwealth of Australia.

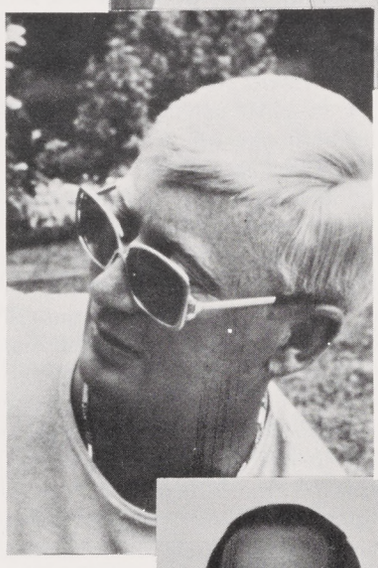
Ms. Judith "Jude" Parkinson: Born at Woolangong, New South Wales, she spent her life as a Roman Catholic until she joined MCC last December at Chartering. She spent about a year in training as a religious sister. She has a degree in Industrial Analytical Chem-



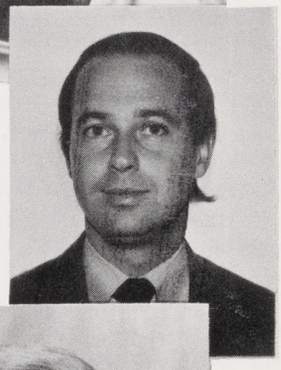
Rev. Arthur Cazeault



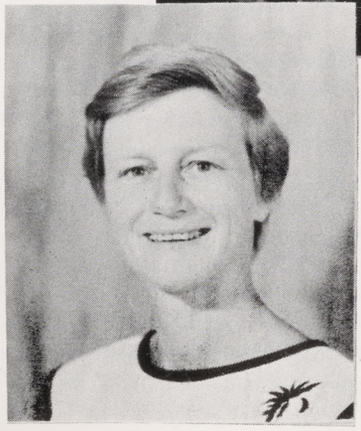
Ian Tupper



Brian Flower



Brian Davies



Judith Parkinson

istry and works in this field for an international firm which provides analytical services to mining and exploration companies.

MCC ZARIA, NIGERIA

Rev. Maduka, pastor of MCC Zaria, Nigeria, in central Africa, writes that "for the past three weeks now the minds of the congregation have been filled with the Holy Spirit. There is a great change in our activities."

He reports that one of the members has donated some musical instruments which are now being used to make the church services more beautiful. Also one of the church members donated some chairs for use by the minister during the service.

The main problem they face is the high cost of their rent for the building in which they worship. They are praying for the day when they will have a sanctuary of their own.

MCC Zaria is situated in a Moslem city of 800,000 population, less than 10% of whom are Christians.

MCC Zaria was recognized as an MCC congregation in November 1974 on the occasion of the visit of the Rev. Lee Carlton. They celebrated their first anniversary in November 1975.

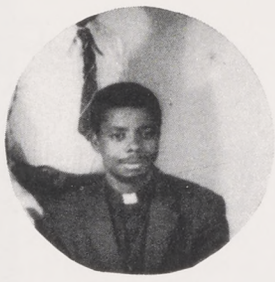
In December 1975 Rev. Maduka represented the Fellowship at the Nigeria Congress on Evangelism. While traveling he investigated the possibility of establishing an MCC in South Nigeria.

Rev. Maduka heard about MCC through reading about it in the Jehova Witness publication, AWAKE, early in 1974. After reading the magazine article (which was not intended to evangelize for MCC or to be complimentary), he wrote to the Fellowship about establishing an ecumenical church open to all people.

"God is wonderful," he writes. "MCC is the church everyone needs."

The first service was held on June 16, 1974 with an attendance of 15 people. "Praise be to God, today MCC Zaria has increased to 64 members."

PASTOR MADUKA to ATTEND CONFERENCE



The following letter from the Rev. Sylvanus Maduka, pastor of MCC Zaria, Nigeria, is so expressive that it tells its own story - the story of Rev. Maduka's anticipation of the General Conference trip to the United States.

"Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God that I am able to be with you for this year's international General Conference.

"My heart has been filled with joy and gladness since I received the message from Rev. Perry. I feel my heart has been relieved of a great burden. I have been hungry and thirsty of seeing my kind brothers and sisters who have been caring for us for over 25 months now.

"It is a pleasure, an opportunity, and a great honour to be invited to our General Conference. It is an opportunity for me as I would see many of the ceremonies, meet with the elders, and share things in full and with confidence.

"I am very grateful as we shall share this love together. As this is my first time of attending an MCC General Conference, I hope you all will be happy, too, as we see each other face to face.

"I would like to study the ways of worshipping in the MCC and how the ceremonies are conducted. This could help in discharging my duties efficiently.

"As soon as I get my passport and visa, I will write you immediately. I hope the Fellowship would be interested to hear MCC Zaria music which I will bring on a tape recorded cassette."

MCC LONDON, ENGLAND

Last summer MCC London held a series of summer Saturday outings. They were so successful that they have resumed them again this summer.

The church program of activities includes a Sunday discussion group, the 7:00 p.m. service and Holy Communion, and the fellowship hour afterward.

The board of directors meets on Monday evenings. Tuesday evenings are reserved for Bible study and prayer group. Thursdays they have their weekly fellowship meeting.

The Rev. Tom Bigelow is pastor, Rev. Ken Taylor (see March IN UNITY) is assistant pastor. Tony Slater is secretary of the board; Jeff Cook is the treasurer. Other members are Jim Heslop, Geoff Kingate, and Tim Spiers.

Jim Holland, head of publications, writes, "We in London continue to find so much joy in our service to Jesus. Our fellowship is small, but we feel that we have a ministry, often, to those who just 'pass through' as well."

Because of some things that have happened recently, MCC London is beginning an outreach to persons in prison there. "We earnestly request the prayers of our brothers and sisters in the United States for the success of this ministry." That work is being coordinated by Tony Slater and Jim Holland.

MCC ministry in the United Kingdom began in mid-1972 when the Rev. Troy Perry (and Dr. Norman Pittenger) addressed the campaign for Homosexual Equality. This sparked interest. A group was formed which became an MCC group October 7, 1973 and Rev. Bigelow became pastor in 1974.

Rev. Bigelow writes in a letter to IN UNITY, "We aren't an American Church in Europe. We are here to serve our people in our culture the way they

Board of Directors, MCC London, (L-R) Tony Slaver, Rev. Ken Taylor, Timothy Spiers, Brian Foster, Rev. Tom Biegelow, Jeff Coer.

need to be served. We are not called to build a big church. In Europe we live in a post-church era. 98% of the people in London never go to church. It is therefore useless to try to build a 'church' in the old sense of large congregations in large buildings."

In reference to his trip to Washington for General Conference, Rev. Bigelow writes, "I come back a somewhat seasoned missionary. For me that means putting my dreams aside and serving the people I am called to serve in the way they will have me serve them. It means accepting the portion God gives me. It means being willing to continue a pilgrim and a stranger. However, I am also a settled missionary. I love the people I am called to serve, and I am quite prepared, if it be God's will, to stay on serving God in Europe for the rest of my earthly life."

Sister Greta Thorne, Deacon; Rev. Joan Wakeford, Pastor; Sister Judi Branscom, Exhorter

MCC SOUTH AFRICA

The second MCC congregation on the continent of Africa is growing, nurtured by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of a licensed MCC minister and two licensed MCC lay ministers from Sacramento, California.

Licensed by the Board of Elders, the Rev. Joan Wakeford has begun a work for the Lord in the name of MCC in Durban, South Africa.

Rev. Wakeford comes to the Universal Fellowship with rich experiences in the Lord's work. From a Charismatic background, she has served congregations in South Africa and labored for several years as a missionary in Japan.

Earlier this year Rev. Wakeford spent eight weeks in Sacramento, studying MCC procedures and polities under the direction of Rev. Elder Freda Smith.

Joan has been joined in South Africa by Exhorter Judi Branscom and Deacon Greta Thorne from the Sacramento church.

The following last minute report was received from Rev. Wakeford just as this issue of IN UNITY was preparing to go to press.

For political reasons, mail for Rev. Wakeford should be addressed to her at the Fellowship Offices, Box 5570 Los Angeles, California, 90055

"VERY DARK DOWN HERE"

by Joan Wakeford

As I write, South Africa is seething with unrest and rioting, such as we have not experienced since I returned here from Japan, on furlough, 15 years ago. The country rocks as news is flashed constantly from Johannesburg over our radios. However, this is a confirmation of Bible signs, as we are urged to recognize "wars and rumours of wars" as a signal of the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When I first met and was led of the Lord to affiliate with MCC in November 1975, I was afraid. I knew I had to return to South Africa immediately as Angola was just a forerunner of things to come in S.A. The writing was on the wall even then.

At that time I was afraid of public opinion, and what people would think of my link with MCC and the repercussion this would cause. Now I am much more afraid. How much longer do we have to reach our beloved brothers and sisters, in Southern Africa, before all hell is let loose?

Time is certainly our enemy. PRAY FOR US is our urgent appeal. We have been asked to do the works of the One that sent us, while it is yet day, for night cometh when no one can work. IT IS GETTING VERY DARK DOWN HERE.

Yet, it is not dark enough that we cannot appreciate the beauty of this complex country, its outstanding countryside, its ideal climate and its mixture of every race and culture. From the English and Dutch to the African, Asian and mixed races. All of whom God loves and for whom we have such a burden and compassion.

Only the Lord can bring us all together in these times of anxiety and pressure from outside influences and only God can solve our extremely complicated problems. With God's help and guidance we have begun to build an MCC fellowship and study group.

How we praise the Lord for the precious times of fellowship we have already had as we come together every Sunday morning to worship and praise our God.

Two very dear friends from the Sacramento church, Judith Branscom and Greta Thorne, have arrived to assist in the work here and even with the cultural shock and change of life-style, they have been a tremendous blessing and help to many of our gay friends.

Our Sunday service, as all our work here, is for everyone, yet strangely enough the most outstanding blessings and outward changes, have come to the hearts of our gay sisters as they have

met with the Lord. Three in particular have had, what they shared with me as, "Wonderful Spiritual Experiences". And we give God all the glory.

So far about 12 to 15 meet each week, but there are others with whom we have met and counselled who have promised to come to our services. Also, our American friends had the opportunity to visit a gay club where the people were surprised to hear about our church and promised to pay us a visit. So the good news is out.

It is very exciting to feel this is God's time to reach the gay community in South Africa, not only in Durban where I live, but throughout the country and especially in Johannesburg where some great interest has been shown in the work of MCC.

This is a great FAITH VENTURE, where one is completely dependent upon the Lord. In looking back over the last 20 years of ministry I can only see God's hand leading and guiding and preparing me for such a time as this.

Already we face the fact it will not all be a bed of roses. South Africa, like its proverbial ostriches, would like to bury the gay population as an ostrich would bury its head. If it doesn't look, we might all go away. But, ready or not, South Africa, MCC is here and we plan to stay.

PRAY FOR US. As the angry lion of bitterness and hate roars throughout the country, may the Author of Peace and Love bring deliverance to our people.

Our prayer, as General Conference draws near, is that the Lord will bless MCC here and worldwide as it spreads the news of FREEDOM IN CHRIST JESUS.

I praise the Lord for all the new friends I have made in this new adventure for the Lord, and I thank God for all those who gave me courage to return to my own country with this very same message.

MCC TORONTO, CANADA

In February 29, 1976, Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto realized a dream, the opening of the Gay Community Services Centre at 29 Granby Street. A house had been rented on a quiet side street just off Yonge Street, one of Toronto's main arteries, and in the heart of the gay community. There was a lot of painting and carpeting to do - furniture to move in, telephone hot-lines to install and peer counsellors and volunteers to schedule on weekly shifts.

Without any formal advertising our presence was soon known in the community. The telephone started to ring and a steady stream of visitors found their way to our MCC doorstep. The "bricks and mortar" of Granby Street is to provide a hassle-free environment for the gays of our community; a place where they can come, visit and relax in a non-clinical setting - comfortable chairs - relaxing music - a counselling office filled with plants, walls painted a soft color and with accented drapes. The atmosphere is homelike. Rooms for discussions, meetings and craft areas are all available.

Already with the number of people utilizing our services in only three months we feel that we will soon outgrow our surroundings. Outgrowth of church and centre activities have involved trips to theatres and plans for one-day outings around the district.

The volunteers receive "on the spot" training and have access to training provided by professional agencies. What wasn't expected was the quick growth of a feeling of love, compassion and caring that is almost tangible - a feeling of family that involves both the volunteers and our guests.

Discussion groups are held on a regular basis, exploring the feelings and opinions of different segments of our community on topics which they consider pertinent to their own life-style, and the understanding of their brothers and sisters.

Poetry is also going well on Tuesday nights. The people that are sharing these evenings are releasing personal tensions and are sharing of themselves with others at a very personal level. Enthusiasm is very high and it's getting harder and harder to break up the sessions on time. No one seems to want to go home.

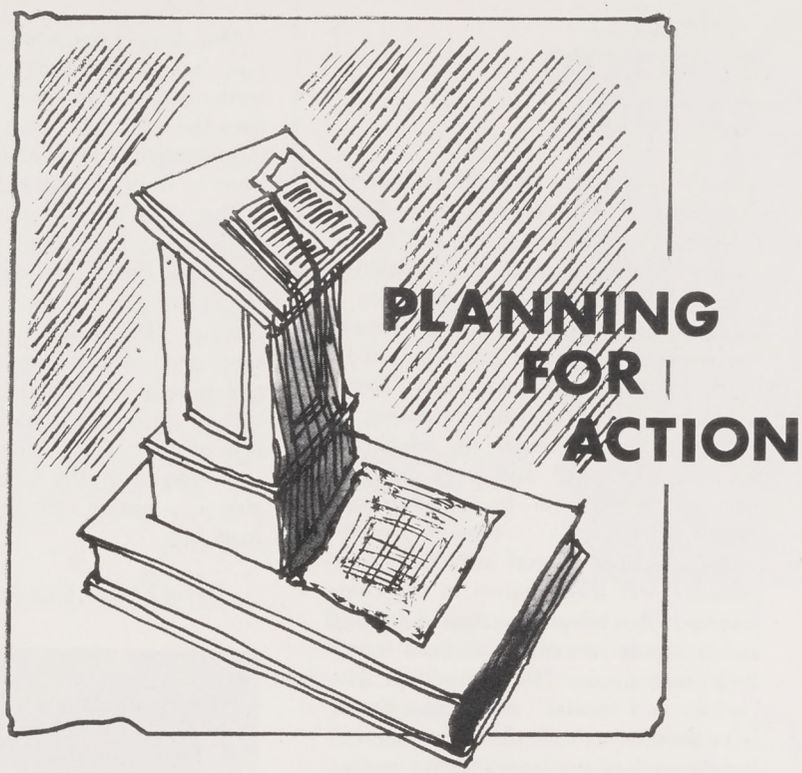
Our doors open each evening at 7:00 p.m. but we find that people come and wait on the verandah an hour or so before the volunteers come on duty. This is indicative, I feel, of the fact that we must be doing something right.

But it is not the result of one person's work. It's a team effort from the Reverend Bob Wolfe right on down to the volunteers who look after the housecleaning chores. Each person is important, each of our drop-ins is important, and as long as we remember this we will remain on the right track. No contribution of time or love is ignored.

If you're in the area do drop in or give us a phone call. We'd love to hear from you.

David Elston, Deacon, MCC-Toronto

The Rev. Robert Wolfe, Pastor of MCC Toronto, Canada and Coordinator of Church Extension for that country.



FAITH, FELLOWSHIP AND ORDER COMMISSION

Chairperson, Howard Wells has called the Faith, Fellowship, and Order Commission to meet in Washington, DC for three days before the opening of the 1976 General Conference.

The Commission will discuss and report to the General Conference in the six basic questions which the Commission has accepted as its challenge this year.

Throughout the Fellowship, district and congregational workshops have discussed the six questions in preparation for the commission meeting.

The six questions are:

1. What is theology? How does it relate to the Christ story?
2. What is the theological task of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches?
3. How do we define the community to which we are called to minister?
4. How might we focus or bring to bear the Christian gospel on the needs of the community we have defined?
5. How might we reflect or manifest that focusing task in our worship?
6. What is/are the basis/es of uniqueness that characterizes the Christian ministry of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches?

The members of the Faith, Fellowship, and Order Commission are:

The Rev. Ron J. Anderson (Ft. Worth)
Mr. John H. Ayres (Tampa)
The Rev. F. Jay Deacon (Hartford)
The Rev. James Glyer (Los Angeles)
Ms. Jackie Harris (San Jose)
The Rev. Rodger D. Harrison (Costa Mesa)
The Rev. Jack Isbell, III (Washington, DC)
Ms. Dolores Jackson (New York)
Ms. Karen J. Linstrom (St. Louis)
Mr. Herm Mank (San Francisco)
The Rev. Gloria A. Merrill (Largo, FL)
The Rev. Richard R. Mickley (Los Angeles)
Mr. Michael Nordstrom (Providence)
Mr. Brian D. Quinn (San Francisco)
Ms. Cindy Smith (San Francisco)
The Rev. Jim Snow (Atlanta)
Ms. Eileen Steichen (Stockton, CA)
The Rev. Valerie Valrejean (Los Angeles)
The Rev. Gary L. Wilson (Anchorage)
The Rev. Nancy Wilson (Detroit)

The Rev. Howard R. Wells, chairperson

IN UNITY has reports from three Faith, Fellowship, and Order workshops. They were held in New York, Detroit, and Los Angeles. The New York workshop was attended by delegates from throughout the northeast district. The Los Angeles workshop was a cooperative work of MCC Los Angeles, MCC of the Valley, MCC Ventura, and MCC West Bay.

A synopsis of the material discussed follows. It is evident that this brief report does not do justice to the significant theological discussions that took place at each of the workshops. The synopsis is arranged here in the order of the six FFO questions.

QUESTION 1. The Detroit workshop, led by the Rev. Nancy Wilson discussed aspects of the definitions of theology given by Mary Daly, Gerhard Von Rad, James Cone, Tom Driver, Sheila Collins, and Harvey Cox.

The northeast district meeting in New York approached the definition of theology from the perspective of the question: "Even if I believe that a man named Jesus was crucified, died and resurrected from the grave 2000 years ago — so what? What difference could that possibly make in my life?" Christians regard the Christ Story as being the decisive breakthrough of God's presence into human history. As such it is the pivot point of all divine revelation. Thus, to do Christian theology is to discern the relevancy of the Christ Story to real life situations of an individual or community, i.e., to identify where Christ is being incarnated today.

In Los Angeles, Rev. Jeff Pulling, working with Ms. Flo Fleischman, presented a lecture on defining theology, the developing of theology, the revelation behind theology, Jesus Christ as the clearest revelation of God and thus the key to Christian theology, and telling and re-telling the Christ Story in meaningful and "grabbing" ways. The team then presented three alternative ways of retelling the Christ Story: the myth of a campfire with a circle of humanity around it; the film "The Antkeeper" which depicts the Gardener saving his ant-creatures by sending his son to become one of them; and the story "Barrington Bunny" from Martin Bell's book *The Way of the Wolf: The Gospel in New Images.*

QUESTION 2. In New York two pre-conference papers were presented: one by Edward T. Hougen, minister of MCC Boston, and a graduate of Union Theological Seminary; and one by F. Jay Deacon, a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, pastor of MCC Hartford and editor of *The Gay Christian.*

In Los Angeles, Rev. Val Valrejean, assisted by Ms. Lucia Chappelle, outlined five theological tasks of MCC: 1)

opening the theological process to all in the church who want to be involved; 2) making fearlessly prophetic statements; 3) developing theology that responds to cries for liberation of the oppressed; 4) re-examining "old theology" in light of our new revelation; 5) and taking into account what it means to be Christian and sexual.

QUESTION 3. In New York it was discovered that there are two prevailing opinions regarding how MCC should define the community it has been called to serve. One opinion is that since MCC is a Christian Church, its work should be directed to all people, without discrimination of any kind. The other opinion is that the community MCC is called to serve should be primarily, but not necessarily exclusively, comprised of gay people.

In Los Angeles, a team led by the Rev. James Glyer and the Rev. Randall Cypherd and composed of members of MCC in the Valley, responded to the questions, "How do we define the community to which we are called to minister?" and "How might we focus or bring to bear the Christian gospel on the needs of the community we have defined?" Their approach was to briefly outline a response to these questions which would stimulate discussion in small groups. Their first contention was that historically the UFMCC was called into existence to minister to those who had been rejected by the existing religious establishment because of their unique sexual identity, and that this ministry to homosexuals must be the prime – but not the exclusive – ministry of UFMCC. Secondly, the "Gay community" is actually made up of several special interest communities, but these communities do have three common characteristics: a unique sexual identity, the experience of oppression, and a resulting sense of alienation. Once the community is defined as such, the task is to define what the Christian Gospel is, to determine the needs of the people to which the UFMCC is called to minister, and then bringing to bear the Christian Gospel on those needs.

QUESTION 4. In New York it was noted that the theological task of MCC is to proclaim the liberating Word of God to the community to which our Christian ministry is directed. Specifically that proclamation must be couched in concepts and language that grow out of that community's experiences...in order that the relevancy and authority of the Gospel can be readily discerned by those to whom it is preached. Rev. F. Jay Deacon listed in some detail five means by which the Gospel can be focused for the specific community of MCC: 1)...Worship and an enlightened approach to education must lie at the heart of our ministry. 2) Structure and environment in which community and individual personhood may flourish... and this is far broader than "Sunday services"...for without "community" there is no church. 3) Assume a stance of advocacy for all oppressed people...4) Develop our understanding of ethics and lifestyle. 5) Do the day-in, day-out work of love by expanding our community-oriented programs.

QUESTION 5. In Los Angeles a team composed of The Rev. Paul Breton, Mr. Larry Rodriguez, and Mr. Virgil Hendershot, answered the question, "How might we reflect or manifest that focusing task in our worship?" Rev. Breton gave a presentation on the concept of worship, the goals or worship, and liturgy as a means to worship. He then stimulated small group discussions on three basic socio-theological areas that must be considered if worship is to be a positive encounter with God, namely ecumenism, cultural communication, and human sexuality. As an illustration of what positive, inclusive, affirming worship could be, the team co-ordinated a closing worship service for the weekend conference.

QUESTION 6. The New York workshop pointed out that MCC must serve as a reminder to the wider religious community that God's love extends to ALL people and the Gospel must no longer be viewed through heterosexual lenses. MCC may be seen as an emerging paradigm for ecumenism and as a place where new revelation regarding sexuality is breaking through into human history, showing hitherto unsuspected relationships between spirituality and sexuality.

In Los Angeles, a team composed of the Rev. Richard Mickley, Ms. Kay Palin, and the Rev. Virgil Scott, pursued the question of the uniqueness that characterizes MCC. Several small groups were started to discuss the uniqueness of MCC's Ministry 1) in its concept of God, 2) in its stress on the total Gospel, 3) in its understanding of what the church is, 4) in its acceptance of all to whom it is called to minister, and 5) in its creatively ministering to all of these people. ●

TASK FORCE ON WOMEN

UFMCC SEEN AS "VANGUARD"
by Angie Umbertino

Rev. Anne Montague, Head of the Women's Task Force of the Human Awareness Commission, sees the UFMCC in a "vanguard role within the Christian Church, in relation to women." She added that even though we have a primary outreach to the gay community, "we have a great potential of reaching women who have left or are uncomfortable in, other churches.

"One advantage MCC has is that we don't have a history of direct oppression of women. While it is true that until more recent years, we did not have very many women active throughout the ministry and leadership of the church, and there are various reasons for this, the Fellowship has never said: 'Women cannot speak in the church, become ministers, or administer the sacraments'."

As we look throughout our various churches, we can still see a lot of controversy regarding the issues of sexism and inclusive language. Rev. Montague feels that various "affirmative action groups started or supported by the Fellowship have improved the situation in some places."

The emphasis should be placed on education rather than the changing of pronouns. "If people had their consciousness raised, the inclusive language would be automatic." Until people understand the reasons for changing of attitudes and language, our efforts will be unsuccessful. It is important to raise consciousness of our ministers and worship coordinators first. They are the ones that have the most influence in regards to the education of the congregations.

In the March '76 issue of IN UNITY, there is a condensed version of a sermon the Rev. Elder James Sandmire delivered in MCC-LA on the subject of women's liberation in the church, entitled "All Are One In Christ Jesus." Rev. Montague made several references to his sermon. MCC-LA has always been a source of leadership for the Fellowship. By Rev. Sandmire's willingness to preach a sermon of this type and have it reprinted in IN UNITY, he has given us a focal point for discussion of this important issue. A sermon of this type has never been preached in the Parent Church. Rev. Montague stated that she

admires Rev. Sandmire for taking "this important and necessary step." This is an example of the educational preaching that needs to be done throughout the Fellowship.

The Women's Task Force will meet at the Conference in Washington. They have basically two goals to accomplish: 1) To work on the *Women's Handbook*, which will be designed to aid in consciousness raising, relate experiences, and show examples of the use of inclusive language within our worship services; 2) To learn to integrate the Women's Task Force more within the Human Awareness Committee (interrelate with the Men's Task Force and the Committee on Racism).

Rev. Anne Montague hopes that in the near future, the UFMCC Credentials Committee will ask men whether they can minister and relate to women; as they now ask women candidates for licensing, "Can you minister and relate to men?"

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION

The Rev. David Carden, chairperson of the Christian Education Commission, interviewed by IN UNITY, indicated a wide variety of goals and projects being initiated by the Commission.

One of the first projects the Commission would like to complete is a church membership manual. Other priority items would include deacon and exhorter training programs, and the publication or distribution of literature suitable for MCC bookstores and Christian education programs.

The Commission will promote the implementation of Christian education programs in local churches and naming ministers of Christian education to administer them. Such programs will supported with education programs for educators.

Rev. Carden will meet in Washington, DC, August 6-8 with the Faith, Fellowship, and Order Commission in order to be a part of and in tune with the theological development within MCC so as to have that background for Christian Education Commission work.

The Commission will meet in Washington, DC, first in open workshop, then in a decision-making meeting of the Commission itself.

COMMISSION ON RELIGIOUS ORDERS

Little Brother Juniper skips along the comic strips of many a home-town newspaper playing his own unique little bits of mischief. Friar Tuck went down into history as the "chaplain" of Robin Hood and his merry men. The Singing Nun, with the help of Ed Sullivan, temporarily brought a new dimension of music to the American scene. Audrey Hepburn brought tears to the eyes of untold thousands in "The Nun's Story". Debbie Reynolds spent some time zooming around in a habit as the Flying Nun. A little friar is not a chicken but a small monk. To what do all of these have allusions? Basically to a system of spiritual reform and renewal within the Christian Church starting in the third century.

Beginning with the days of the Stylites and Anchorites to the contemporary secular communities such as Koinonia, religious orders have consistently played a significant role in the reform, renewal and re-creation of the Christian Church. The spirit underlying all the movements toward religious institutes has been a spirit of spiritual strengthening and service to the church universal. The form of service has differed through the centuries ranging from monastic disciplines, such as the Rules of St. Basil and St. Benedict, through the Mendicant Disciplines, such as the Franciscans. Other disciplines which later developed include the formation of religious societies, congregations and oratories of men and women dedicated to serving God in the specified fields of education, medicine, social service or missionary work.

In the last century other religious movements have risen to more adequately serve the needs of the people through such secular movements as the Cursillo Movement, the Apostolic Renewal Movement and Caritas. The Reform Tradition of the Church has also seen its own rise of religious institutes. In some instances, such as Methodism and the Salvation Army, these institutes became separate denominations. In other instances, such as the Shakers, these institutes have ceased to exist.

There exists in this day in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches the same desire to serve God and the Church in a variety of ways other than the offices of the Church established in our By-Laws. The Commission on Religious Orders was formed as that body of the Universal Fellowship which would explore the possibilities and viabilities of religious institutes in service to the contemporary community of our church. The Commission will be establishing the ground rules and the foundation upon which any potential religious institutes will be acting. Expecting from persons who seek the religious life a spirit of humble obedience to God's will as expressed through this Fellowship and its constituted agencies, the Commission has the intention of seeking out dynamic programs for the strengthening and growth of the contemporary community which this Fellowship serves.

At this point of time, no community has been officially recognized as an institute or "order" of this Fellowship. However, those persons or groups of persons interested in the formation of religious houses, as authorized pilot projects, are encouraged to proceed with all due haste in a spirit of acquiescence to the Gospel and the Fellowship. Materials are being made available and will be published for distribution by the Commission in the very near future. Any and all persons seeking further information are invited to contact:

Rev. J. E. Paul Breton
Chairperson, Commission on Religious Orders, UFMCC
Post Office Box 5570
Los Angeles, California 90055
Tel.: (213) 680-2111
(213) 700-4716 - Home
(213) 748-0121 - Work

BY-LAWS COMMITTEE

Proposals of changes in our By-Laws received by the By-Laws Committee before and during General Conference '76 would be considered by the committee and presented to the General Conference '76 as part of the committee's report. These proposals would be classified as "Priority I" proposals.

Proposals received by the committee after General Conference '76 and before the end of March '77 would be considered by the committee and presented in writing to all concerned parties in advance of General Conference '77. These proposals would be classified as "Priority II" proposals.

Proposals received after March '77 would be considered by the committee and made available to General Conference '77 as "Priority III" proposals.

At General Conference '77, "Priority I" proposals would be presented first to the assembly followed by "Priority II" and "Priority III" proposals respectively.

It would be suggested that all "Priority I" proposals should be placed on the floor, debated, and voted on since these proposals have been under consideration for at least one year and all delegates should be adequately prepared to deal with these issues.

"Priority II" proposals should also be placed on the floor, debated, and voted on; however, tabling the issues might be an option for a variety of reasons.

"Priority III" proposals should be made available to the assembly, but only those proposals of considerable urgency would be placed on the floor. This would be accomplished by requiring a majority vote of the delegates to consider such proposals.

Fully realizing that the wishes of the General Conference are primary, there is still the need to structure our By-Laws revision process so that change can be accomplished within a framework that lends itself to good communication and to a wise use of time. With some education as to the need for a timeline and a classification process, these goals can be accomplished.

Herm Mank
Chairperson, By-Laws Committee

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION COMMISSION

In the June 1976 Board of Elders meeting, the Elders appointed R. Adam DeBaugh, assistant director of the UFMCC Washington Office, to be chairperson of the Commission on Christian Social Action.

Former chairperson, Terry "Spider" Luton, has resigned as chair for personal reasons, Elder Troy D. Perry said.

"The work of the commission is all fairly new to me, "Adam DeBaugh commented, "but we are trying to pull things together so that this can be a dynamic and active commission in the Universal Fellowship."

The Commission is divided into four parts, DeBaugh explained. The Commission, itself, will hopefully co-ordinate very closely with the Washington Office and with social action chairpeople in the local churches. The emphasis will probably be on gay civil rights legislation on the local, state, and national levels, and on legislation which effects gay people, such as Senate Bill 1, the criminal code reform bill.

The Committee on Racism will be working on the issue of racism within MCC and the society at large. "As a liberation church, MCC cannot afford to fail to deal with the vestiges of our racism. We must make common cause with other minorities and assist in the struggle for liberation wherever oppression is.

The Committee on Human Awareness is divided into a Task Force on Women and a Task Force on Men. "There will continue to be problems and issues that are uniquely women's or uniquely and these task forces will strive to deal with these issues. Of especial interest is the question of sexism within MCC, and the attempts to rid our services of sexist language, " DeBaugh said.

"It is my hope that the Commission on Christian Social Action can work closely with the Washington Office, the International Offices in Los Angeles, and the social action people in each MCC Church, Mission and Study Group to develope a clear idea of what social action means for Metropolitan Community Church," DeBaugh told IN UNITY. "We need to identify the kinds of approaches we are willing to take and we need to concentrate on the issues that most touch the lives of our people"

The Commission will meet, Tuesday, August 10, at 10 a.m. during General Conference, and is sponsoring a panal discussion on Social Action Wednesday afternoon from 3:45 to 5:45 p.m. It is co-sponsoring an open house at the Washington Office on Capitol Hill Wednesday, August 11, from 12 noon to 3:30 p.m. during which MCCers will be urged to visit the offices of their Congresspeople.

BOARD OF CAMPUS MINISTRY

Outreach to college and university campuses is among the newest of MCC specialized ministries. The Board of Campus Ministry was instituted by the 1975 General Conference and was charged with carrying our message and ministry to persons on campuses. Campuses sre communities of unique needs in which individuals often remain unexposed to conventional Christian outreach.

At present, there are five UFMCC campus ministries. they are spread across the United States at Rhode Island College, in Providence; at American University, in Washington, D.C.; at Pennsylvania State University, in University Park; at Chicago Circle Campus of the University of Illinois; and at California State University at Sacramento.

COMMISSION ON INNOVATIVE MINISTRIES

by Rev. Joan Johnson

The immediate priority of the Commission on Innovative Ministries, is to formulate feasible ideas, and plan workable programs to meet the needs of the various congregations.

The projected goals are of a long range duration. The board of elders has made this a five year standing Commission, appointing stable and interested people, who are willing to serve on this Commission for a length of time. As the Innovative Ministries grow, more people will be added.

Questionnaires were sent out to every church in the Fellowship, and a survey made of the "existing needs." Rev. Joan Johnson, Chairperson of the Commission, reports that a surprisingly high percentage of MCC congregations answered this survey and the information will be a great help in developing on-going programs.

A public relations program has been undertaken. It includes correspondence, writing and mailing brochures, personal witness, and training programs.

At the present time, Aging, Alcohol and a Ministry to the Handicapped fall under the Innovative Ministries. We already have a task force working in the area of drug abuse, and are hopeful this task force will be approved by the Board of Elders, and become an active part of the Commission.

The following guidelines, have been set up, and at present the Commission is working in these areas:

AGING:

Teaching the concept of 'aging' as the "third-age, new generation," the time to become creative and productive with the experience and knowledge that the older person has gained through the years.

Surveying congregations for people who have reached 50 and beyond. Establishing problem areas that "older" gay people have. Setting up rap groups for these people.

Involving these people in the total workings of the church, and ministering to them on an individual need basis.

Creating convalescent home or hospital visitation and/or worship services. Making an outreach into the whole community.

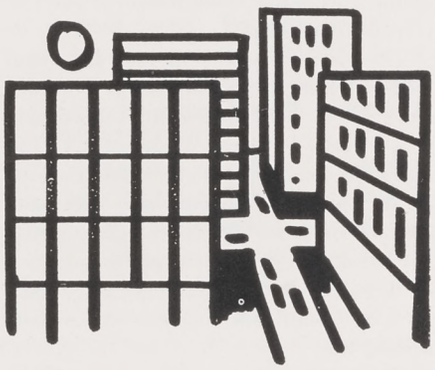
Determining the need and type of social programs that would appeal to the aging: such as coffee hours, dances, games, theatre parties and the family concept.

Trying to "Bridge the Gap" raps with youth groups, to ascertain problems that may exist, keeping older gays in communication with total congregation.

ALCOHOL:

The National Alcoholic Ministry has already made great strides in making people aware of the problems that exist.

We must train our ministers, exhorters and deacons to work with the community facilities that are available. They include recovery houses, local Alcoholism Councils, detoxification centers and alcoholism counselors. Great harm can be done by a person who is not knowledgable in the area of alcohol counseling. Therefore it is necessary that they are aware of where to turn for help.



We must write and distribute material on the subject of alcoholism, geared toward rehabilitation, education and prevention. We need to stress the physical symptoms and health problems of the alcoholic, how and why it happens.

We must encourage our ministers to *endorse* the Alcoholics Together and Alcoholics Anonymous programs. We should remember *we are not* affiliated, in any way, with either program. However we can and do endorse the programs, and provide meeting spaces at reasonable rents.

We should establish communication with spouses, lovers, friends and families of alcoholics, providing them with counseling and referral to Al-Anon or Ala-Teen programs.

The National Alcoholic Ministry has already established a world-wide list of all "gay AA or AT" meetings. This list must be constantly up-dated and kept available for anyone requesting it. It is necessary that each church keep the NAM informed of any new meetings, discontinued meetings, or changes that effect the list; so the list can be current at all times.

Establish grape juice lines of Communion, or have grape juice available for those who desire it. We are well aware this can cause some theological problems for some of our clergy. We feel, however, they should be made aware of the stumbling block wine Communion can be for some people, and that not receiving both elements can make Communion less than meaningful.

Train our clergy to use grape juice Communion in hospital visitation and/or prison ministry.

Produce religious counseling for recovering alcoholics.

Request that *all* Ministers, Exhorters and Deacons attend some type of seminar on alcoholism, to learn the fundamentals of coping with the problem.

HANDICAPPED:

Once more the word education must be stressed. People need to be made aware that sympathy is the last thing a handicapped person needs or wants.

A booklet called *The Chirho Concept* has been prepared and financed by the Chirho group in Los Angeles. It is a simplified program for dealing with the problems of the handicapped. It outlines methods of self-help, with visible goals, that help the handicapped respond to their own needs. It also involves those who are not handicapped themselves, but are interested.

There is a need for people to learn the differences, between visible, invisible, physical and emotional handicaps.

We should make our board of directors members aware of the problems involved in trying to use wheelchairs, crutches etc. in some MCC buildings.

We ought to involve ourselves in homes and hospitals for the handicapped, bringing individual counseling, inspiration, and worship services where feasible.

We should involve ourselves with community organizations or agencies that work in this area, and can provide us with the necessary help. We can work with organizations such as the Braille Institute, International Guiding Eyes, Epilepsy Foundation, and many others.

In a final analysis, the Commission on Innovative Ministries can only accomplish as much as the people involved are willing to work and give. We cannot or do not expect over-night miracles. Input from churches will be vital, as it will determine what programs, ideas or suggestions are palatable or feasible. As a Christ-centered Fellowship, we cannot look away from those who turn to us for help. An aging person needs to know they are important and have an opportunity to be involved. A handicapped person needs to feel self-sufficient, and an alcoholic needs to be shown how and where they can find a new way of life for themselves. These things will be reward enough.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks for the coverage of Evangelicals Concerned on page 19 of the May issue of IN UNITY. Unfortunately, there is a serious typographical error in the address given for me. You've listed it as 30th Street. It should be 60th Street. The correct address is 30 E. 60th St. Would you please make a correction in your next issue so that those who will get their letters marked "addressee unknown" will be able to follow up. Thanks.

Also, let me say that I was *very* impressed with the look of the latest IN UNITY; truly a professional job and you are to be congratulated!

Dr. Ralph Blair
The Homosexual Counseling Center, Inc.
30 E. 60th St.
NY, NY 10022

The May IN UNITY was a wonderful issue. I have given it to a number of people and am proud to be able to have IN UNITY as a representative of what MCC is all about.

Adam DeBaugh
Editor, *Gays on the Hill*
Assistant Director UFMCC
Washington Office

We are enclosing our check for the May issue of IN UNITY. Henceforth, we will send the check directly to you. Our records indicate that we have remitted for each issue. We have been including this in our check for the Fellowship tithe and have sent it to the Fellowship treasurer.

Thank you for a beautiful publication. We are very proud of what our Fellowship is doing in this area, and we are really pleased when we can use this as a working tool in dealing with the straight community. Keep up the good work!

Rev. Wallace Lanchester
Pastor, MCC Seattle
Seattle, WA 98112

I do not often write fan letters to editors or about publications; however, this is an exception. I have, in my hands, the latest copy of IN UNITY, Vol. VI, No. 3, and I must tell you, it is the finest that has been done to date. The editorial content is excellent and has great meaning for Christian and non-christian. It is my belief that the publication fulfills a function far beyond that of a news and opinion journal of the Fellowship. Keep up the good works.

Dr. Newt Deiter

With great interest I have read IN UNITY and geel it is a great source of general information and spiritual uplift.

I would like to seee how lives have been changed by the spiritual food people receive from MCC. I feel at present social changes are being placed in the front. It may be good to look at what is most important — placing the Lord Jesus Christ first in our lives. Otherwise MCC could go like many other groups — just a social group — not lifting up Jesus Christ and building one another up in the faith.

Keep reminding people what MCC teaches: one must be born again and have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lee Noklely
Granite Falls, WA

I am a member of MCC Wichita. It's a good feeling to know that we are a part of a warm, exciting, and explosive movement that is world wide. In my opinion that is one of the greatest benefits of your publication.

Our excellent pastor, Rev. Art Ramirez frequently impresses upon us how congregations are willing to keep each other in the Fellowship. This is reported well in your publication.

I have never read a publication that is involved with the gay life style that has the range and scope that you achieve. You warmly touch every aspect of our lives.

Robert J. Zander
Wichita, KS

Only a note to tell you I am impressed, awed, thrilled and overwhelmed by IN UNITY.

Also to send you this bit of copy I hope you will find space for in the Conference issue.

Rev. Elder Freda Smith
Sacramento

I think the magazine is really great. The layout is very good, especially the theological material on colored pages so that I can find it in a hurry.

Rev. Stan Harris, Pastor
MCC Adelaide, Australia

Just a few lines to let you know we are all impressed with IN UNITY and feel confident that we'll gain much needed information and insight into the world of the gay Christian. It is truly refreshing to see the Lord's name in print without finding gay people damned and condemned.

Edward Stayer, Pres.
Central Michigan Gay Liberation, Inc.
Box 34, Warriner Hall
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859

Our most sincere congratulations on IN UNITY! We are so impressed with the May issue that we are instituting a quiz and rap session on the contents of the current issue and all future issues in our deaconate training program. The rationale being the IN UNITY is the best possible source of knowing what is going on in UFMCC and ministerial staff personnel must be fully aware of these outreaches and ministries.

Rev. Robert Falls, Pastor
MCC Houston

This is just a short note to let you know how much we (and I personally) appreciate the labor, effort and love that goes into IN UNITY. It is a magnificent magazine, one that I would be proud to say I had a part in.

I have just written Rev. Elder Troy Perry on other matters and also bragged on IN UNITY. As you can see, I'm very impressed by it...and honestly so!

So much is going on within MCC that it sometimes boggles the mind as to the sheer extent of it all. IN UNITY does a fantastic job of bringing it all together! This is a much needed effort and can (and *does*) be of immense help not only to the larger straight community but also a vital means of awakening some of our closeted and timid brothers and sisters as to what is actually going on within UFMCC and the individual MCC's around the world.

Hank Bonney
Editor, *The Key*
MCC Houston

Your May issue is a masterpiece. Your cover sets a theme and you develop it masterfully. You have produced something of historical significance.

Morris Kight
Los Angeles

I sincerely enjoyed reading IN UNITY for the first time. And I am happy to once again have the desire to get involved with something other than work.

Your cartoon (p. 54, March) equating the saint from the early church persecutions to the saint killed in the New Orleans bombing was extremely weak and very damaging to the cause of acceptance.

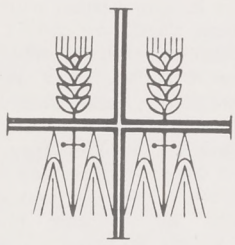
In neither case was death that which "earned" the crown. The crowns were given by Christ because they accepted Him as their personal savior.

Gary L. Spencer

Decatur, GA

Enclosed is $10.00 for my subscription to IN UNITY. You have one of the finest publications of its type that I have ever seen. It contains more news than any kind of similar publication that I know of. I think that it is truly a fine piece of journalism, which can do little else but further God's work in the world. I am proud of it whenever I show it to my friends. Many of them are amazed at what is taking place in the church, and are surprised to see the activity which is engaged in in the cause of gay, women's, and human rights. It is truly a fine evangelistic tool — for God and God's work in the gay movement.

Ken Keate
Coordinator of Advertising
The Epistle
MCC of the Twin Cities



Thank you for putting *The Gay Christian* all in the center, making it easier to share. It comes across very nicely since it is printed in a different color paper. I'm pleased with every issue. I will be talking with Jay Deacon in the near future, but you can tell him that I think he is doing a great job.

Richard Roberts, Jr.
MCC Philadelphia

First Congregational UCC

HOST CONGREGATION FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE VII

Condensed from a lengthy article
by Jennie B. Bull, MCC-DC

The host congregation for Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, DC, is First Congregational United Church of Christ, located at 10th and G Streets, NW, in downtown Washington since 1865. First Church, as it is called, is one of the oldest churches in the city and its witness since its founding has been and continues to be an inspiration to Washingtonians. A congregation founded immediately after the Civil War on the principle of racial equality, First Church helped start Howard University and has always included a substantial number of blacks in its membership. The church is well-known in the Washington area for its ecumenical efforts, its outstanding musical program, its leadership in intellectual forums and social efforts and the considerable number of legislators and federal officials (including the Chief Executive) who have attended over the years.

The same spirit of meeting new challenges and of mission that led to the foundation of First Church, 108 years later led the church to extend its hand to MCC-DC, offering a place to hold worship services. As with all mission, the path has not been easy. First Church has seen conflict and tragedy along the way.

Two years ago a slim majority of First Church members voted not to renew MCC's contract for use of the building. The resulting concern, soul-searching and education within the First Church congregation led to a reversal of that decision a few months later and has produced a covenant relationship between the two congregations that includes joint activities, daul membership for a few persons, and growth for all concerned.

First Congregational United Church of Christ provides a noble example of Christian mission. MCC-DC is fortunate to be part of this church's life and draws inspiration from its example. Where will UFMCC be 100 years from now? What heritage will *we* leave? To quote from a 1963 resolution adopted by the First Church congregation:

"The history of First Church is evidence that our forebears also understood that the Church is Mission. Support for abolition of slavery, the founding of Howard University, the establishment of sister churches, and the work of First Church members in missions abroad and at home and in their work and civic life for almost a century, are challenges to us. The decision to remain at 10th and G Streets leaves us no choice. The Church is Mission."

And we have no choice, either.

Washington Office Open House

The Washington National Office of UFMCC will be sponsoring an open house on Capitol Hill for MCCers on Wednesday, August 11, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

The office, located at Suite 210, 110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., is right on Capitol Hill. The building the office is in is owned by the United Methodist Church and sits on a triangular plot which is across 1st Street, N.E. from the U.S. Capitol.

Rev. Roy Birchard, Director of the Washington Office, and Adam DeBaugh, the office's Assistant Director and Chairperson of the Commission on Christian Social Action for the Universal Fellowship, will be on hand during the open house, along with a number of staff people from Congressional offices.

This time has been set aside by the Board of Elders for people to visit Capitol Hill and the Washington Office and to see their Congresspeople and Senators. The Washington Office staff will assist people in the visits to their Congresspeople whenever necessary, providing suggestions on what to say to specific Congresspeople and collecting information on what the Congresspeople are saying to us.

Parents of Gays

For the past two and a half years, a Parents of Gays group has been meeting in the Washington, D.C. area. One of a growing number of independently formed POGs across the country, this group provides an opportunity for us mothers and fathers to find, and enjoy, new understanding of our gay daughters and sons.

As we meet with other parents, we suddenly lose our awful sense of isolation, when we share our feelings and experiences with others who have been through the same thing. Just "talking about it" - about how bad, or angry, or sick we feel, or what our apprehensions are - gives us a great relief, so that we begin to be able to deal more effectively with what has been, for most of us, an extremely trying and shocking experience. Knowing that "these other nice people" have felt, or do feel, the same way (or worse) than we do seems to lessen the intensity of our distress.

A few gay women or men frequently attend our meetings; this gives us parents a chance to get to know "gay people," to ask questions, and to percieve that, in fact, they are very much like us - that, in fact, there really are no "they" and "we".

In addition, POG-DC has gathered a small lending library - a cross-section of good gay literature that helps us expand our knowledge and understanding of this sexual orientation.

Until recently, we were meeting twice a month; this has been reduced to once a month - a change resulting in better attendance, and some very lively meetings. While we continue to be concerned about "how to reach more parents," we note, too, that several new parents have come to our group recently. Overall, about 35 parents have attended at least one meeting since the group formed in May 1974; regular attendance now ranges from five or six to 10 or 12.

A few of us have appeared on local radio or TV programs in the past, and have, in other ways, reached out to others in this community and elsewhere to promote greater understanding between parent and child and among others in our society.

Parents of gay women and men truly need each other for support, for encouragement, and as a source of new information. Young gay people continually ask: "Is there a group in (my hometown)?"

All too often, we have to say that we know of none - even in a nearby community. But slowly, new groups are forming - or at least interested and dedicated parents offer to act as contact for other parents of gays in their areas. Most recent information indicates that there are Parents of Gays groups, or contacts for them, in New York City; Los Angeles and San Francisco in California; Clearwater, Jacksonville and Pensacola in Florida; Louisville, Kentucky; Baltimore, Maryland; Boston, Mass.; Minneapolis; Cranbery, N.J. and Kennebunkport, Maine (same parents in those two places); Houston, Texas; Milwaukee and Whitewater, Wisconsin; and there are as yet unconfirmed reports of willing parents in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

Several would-be contact parents note the discouraging lack of response from other parents. It is difficult - perhaps at least as difficult as for gay people themselves - for parents to "come out" and acknowledge publicly that one of their children is homosexual. But it's worth it to them to do so - if they will only risk that first meeting. Parent groups -- and especially those parents who are willing to start a group - need the support and assistance of concerned gay people, as well as that of organizations such as MCC.

There really is a great new movement afoot. Won't you help?

Betty Fairchild
Coordinator
Parents of Gays - Washington, D.C.

BETTY FAIRCHILD PUBLISHES
PARENTS OF GAYS

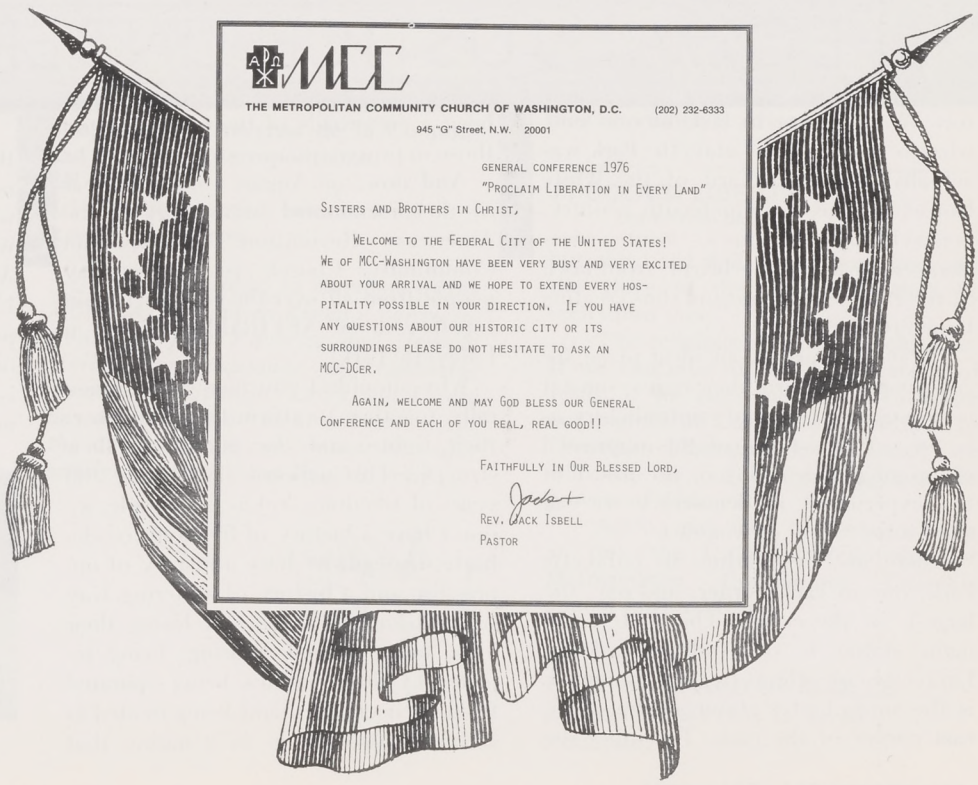
Betty Fairchild of MCC Washington, DC has authored a 25 page booklet, *Parents of Gays*, which will be available at the General Conference bookstore in Washington and can be ordered by mail from Lambda Rising, 1724 20th Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20009. The booklet sells for $1.35.

A review in *Contact*, the official monthly newsletter of Evangelicals Concerned, June 1976, says, "Ms. Fairchild has at last broken the silent treatment given to parents of gays. This booklet presents a running commentary on the conflicts, problems, and some answers that parents can and do share with their gay offspring.

"This brave mother shares with others what the organization, 'Parents of Gays,' has done and is doing in the Washington, DC area and has since found fertile soil in other parts of the country.

"This booklet also includes a suggested reading list and POG contacts in other United States cities.

"This popular little booklet, first published in April 1975, is now in its third edition."



MCC
THE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF WASHINGTON, D.C. (202) 232-6333
945 "G" Street, N.W. 20001

GENERAL CONFERENCE 1976
"PROCLAIM LIBERATION IN EVERY LAND"

SISTERS AND BROTHERS IN CHRIST,

WELCOME TO THE FEDERAL CITY OF THE UNITED STATES! WE OF MCC-WASHINGTON HAVE BEEN VERY BUSY AND VERY EXCITED ABOUT YOUR ARRIVAL AND WE HOPE TO EXTEND EVERY HOSPITALITY POSSIBLE IN YOUR DIRECTION. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR HISTORIC CITY OR ITS SURROUNDINGS PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK AN MCC-DCER.

AGAIN, WELCOME AND MAY GOD BLESS OUR GENERAL CONFERENCE AND EACH OF YOU REAL, REAL GOOD!!

FAITHFULLY IN OUR BLESSED LORD,

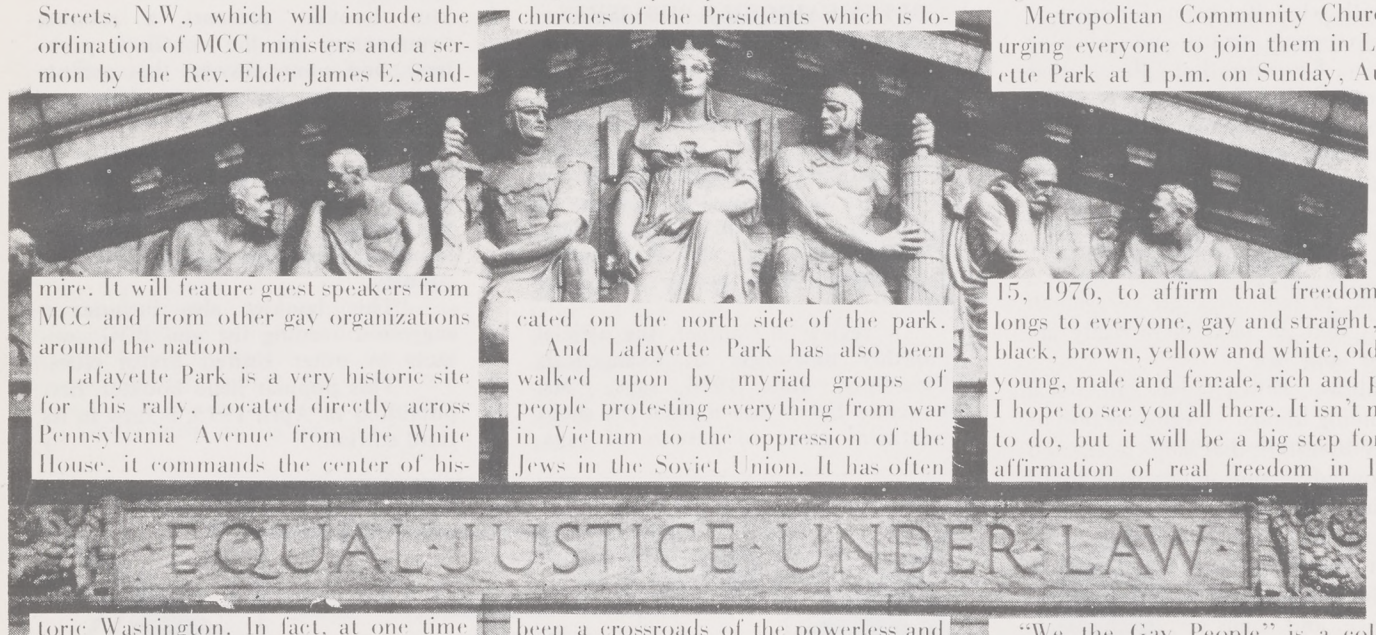
REV. JACK ISBELL
PASTOR

We the Gay People

by Adam DeBaugh

Gay people are going to affirm their right to be free and proud, first class citizens in a massive rally in Washington, D.C.'s Lafayette Park on August 15.

The rally, in which over 2,000 people are expected to participate, will be on the final day of the Seventh Annual General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. The rally begins at 1 p.m., after a Sunday morning worship service in the Warner Theatre at 13th and E Streets, N.W., which will include the ordination of MCC ministers and a sermon by the Rev. Elder James E. Sandmire. It will feature guest speakers from MCC and from other gay organizations around the nation.



Lafayette Park is a very historic site for this rally. Located directly across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, it commands the center of historic Washington. In fact, at one time what is now called Lafayette Park was actually the front yard of the White House. In the mid-nineteenth century, Pennsylvania Avenue's route was changed to bisect the broad, front lawn of the President's mansion, thus creating Lafayette Park.

Lafayette Park is an ideal place for gay people to affirm their rights, since it is as anachronistic and contradictory as is the very existence of this oppressed group of people living in the midst of the experiment in democracy we call the United States of America.

There are five statues in Lafayette Park, one in each corner, and one, the largest, in the center. The center, and main statue is of Andrew Jackson. Lafayette, for whom the park is named, is the subject of a statue in the southeast corner of the park. The other statues are of Kosciuszko, Von Steuben and Rochambeau.

For many years, Lafayette Park was a well-known, and very active cruising area for gay men. Police routinely patrolled the park, and just a routinely arrested some people every once in a while. All in the sight of the White House.

Presidents have been known to walk across Lafayette Park on their way to St. John's Episcopal Church, one of the churches of the Presidents which is located on the north side of the park.

And Lafayette Park has also been walked upon by myriad groups of people protesting everything from war in Vietnam to the oppression of the Jews in the Soviet Union. It has often been a crossroads of the powerless and those in power.

And now, on August 15, in the year of the bicentenniel, anniversary of the American Revolution, Metropolitan Community Church is inviting gay people from all over the country to join together in an AFFIRMATION '76 in Lafayette Park.

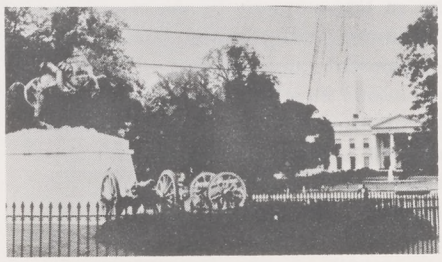
Why shouldn't gay men and women rally together to affirm their existence, their rights, and the validity of their struggle? This nation is celebrating 200 years of freedom. Yet as gay people, we don't have a history of freedom to celebrate. Instead, we have a history of oppression and a history of suffering. Gay women and men are still losing their jobs, being denied housing, being rejected by their families, being separated from their children and being treated as second class citizens in a nation that prides itself on being a citadel of freedom.

Where is the freedom for gay Americans? What have we to celebrate? It is in our own selves, our organizations, our support for each other. That is why we are getting together on August 15, to affirm our right to worship, our right to speak the truth about who we are and about our sexuality, our right to hold jobs, to use public accomodations and facilities, to rent, buy, sell and mortgage homes, to serve in the military to teach and be ministers, and especially, our right to love each other.

AFFIRMATION '76 is not a demonstration. It is not a confrontation. We are going to gather peacably to stand up in the open air on a Sunday afternoon and affirm our right to be here, our right to be free.

Metropolitan Community Church is urging everyone to join them in Lafayette Park at 1 p.m. on Sunday, August 15, 1976, to affirm that freedom belongs to everyone, gay and straight, red, black, brown, yellow and white, old and young, male and female, rich and poor. I hope to see you all there. It isn't much to do, but it will be a big step for the affirmation of real freedom in 1976.

"We the Gay People" is a column that appears in a number of regional gay newspapers around the country and which originates in THE BLADE of Washington, D. C. It is written by R. Adam DeBaugh, Assistant Director of UFMCC's Washington Office and Chairperson of the Fellowship's Commission on Christian Social Action. This column is written for the August issues of the newspapers in which it appears.



Lafayette Park, Washington, DC

Information Booths

MCC–DC reports that it is well prepared for the numerous requests concerning Conference activities, service times, sight-seeing, places to eat, and all the other information questions that arise at General Conference. There will be two information booths; one located at First Congregational Church, the Conference site, and the other at the Ambassador Hotel, where most of the Conference attenders will be staying.

The booths will distribute "Welcome to DC" packets to all out-of-towners who register for Conference. These packets will contain information on DC in general and DC's gay community in particular. They will contain material on sightseeing, places to eat cheaply, gay establishments, and, of course, a general purpose map of the city.

Both booths will be open during conference hours and the hotel info booth will be open 24 hours a day before Conference begins, and the first day of Conference. Message boards will be at both booths for the posting of messages for Conference attenders. The information booth staff told IN UNITY, "Anyone who has a question they can't find an answer for, will find a sleepy but friendly face waiting at the info booths to help them."

Memorial Service

The Board of Elders of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches will be laying a wreath at the Lincoln Memorial the Friday night of General Conference.

The ceremony will take place after the Friday evening worship service at MCC–DC and will begin at about 10 p.m. on Friday, August 13.

MCC members and others attending the ceremony will sing a hymn, listen to the reading of scripture and share in a memorial to the gay martyrs who have died as a result of gay oppression. The Rev. Troy D. Perry, founder and Moderator of UFMCC, and the other members of the Board of Elders will place a wreath at the Lincoln Memorial.

It is fitting that such a ceremony take place at the shrine of the Great Emancipator. Over 100 years ago, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves in this country. And yet, gay women and men are still not free and we still do not share in the liberty for which Lincoln struggled all his life.

Our presence at the Lincoln Memorial will commemorate gay people's struggle for emancipation and the gay martyrs who have gone on before us.

Washington Office

In October, 1975, the UFMCC established its Washington office with two staff people to serve as a major presence in the nation's capitol for the young denomination. The UFMCC provides a number of services including:

Services for MCC's members and other people in the gay community: helping to set up appointments with members of congress, keeping information on Congresspeople's position on gay rights, acting as a referral service for gay people.

It acts as a representative of Metropolitan Community Church to the social action, mission, civil liberties and other Washington offices of the mainline denominations.

It helps to educate the U.S. Congress about gay people and gay oppression in this country. It also will assist in the drafting and publicizing of legislation.

It acts as a liaison between the UFMCC, Washington and the gay caucuses of the mainline denominations, providing them with information, support, assistance and materials.

It works with Congressional staff people who are gay, and with supportive non-gays.

The Metropolitan Community Church has created a Washington office because it believes that as Christians we are compelled to involve ourselves in the struggle for justice in the world. This means taking a part in the political and legislative arena as well. It is especially important for MCC to stand up and be counted where the oppression of gay men or women is an issue.

PROCLAIM LIBERTY –
cont. from page 2

mente presenciaremos una vez en la vida.

De nuevo, esperamos que gozen su estancia en est pais. A todos los Hermamos y hermannas aqui presentes el Consejo Directivo Internacional espera que la Conferncia General sea una marca espiritual indeleble en la historia de nuestra iglesia. Asi sucedera si permitimos la entrada del Espiritu Santo a nuestros corazones. Si asistimos a esta Conferencia anhelando que Dios nos bendiga asi sucedera.

Quizas el Profeta Isaias pueda ver el momento en que vivinos y conozca el trabajo que Dios ha asignado a nuestra Igelsia y que el Senor nos traera el crecimiento espiritual a la comunidad en la que trabajamos.

Si continuamos glorificando el nombre de Jesus, si continuamos marchando bajo el estandarte del amor si continuamos "Proclamando la liberacion en nuestra tierra" triunfaremos en la lucha contra el espiritu de las tinieblas Una vez mas, que Dios – bendiga a cada uno de ustedes en esta la Celebracion y Fiesta del Espiritu – de la Congregacion Universal de la Comunidad de Iglesias Metropolitianas.

EN CRISTO,
del Consejo Directivo Internacional
Rev. Troy D. Perry

(We are grateful to members of the MCC LA Servicio en Espanol congregation, and Jose Espinoza and Herman Merino for assistance in translating articles into Spanish. Larry and I were day dreaming as we went to press, about the day when we can present all major articles in Spanish and English. rrm)

PROCLAIM LIBERTY –
cont. from page 2

but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and the glory of the Lord God shall be seen upon thee."

The religious world is watching us. If we continue to hold up the name of Jesus, if we continue to march under our banner of Love; if we continue to "Proclaim Liberation in the Land," we will win in our struggle against the powers of darkness.

Again, may God bless each of you at this, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Church's annual spiritual feast.

In Christ,
FOR THE BOARD OF ELDERS
Reverend Elder Troy D. Perry
Moderator

PEOPLE:

Some biographical information on some of the speakers and panelists at this year's General Conference

JOHN E. BOSWELL

Dr. John E. Boswell obtained his Ph.D. in medieval history from Harvard in 1975. He is a specialist in the history of the Christian church.

He is Assistant Professor of History at Yale University, where he teaches two courses related to gay people and Christianity. He is the first Yale professor to mention gay people in the Yale catalog.

His forthcoming book, *The Royal Treasure*, dealing with Muslim-Christian dynamics, will be published by Yale University Press.

Antoher forthcoming book will deal with the attitude of early and medieval Christianity toward homosexuality and gay people.

Dr. Boswell will lecture on this subject on Saturday, August 14 at the MCC General Conference in Washington. Dignity members who heard Dr. Boswell deliver the keynote address at their Boston Convention last Labor Day will testify that the dynamic and witty John Boswell, who happens to be a professor at the age of 28, is not to be missed.

His lecture will let the cat out of the bag on some of the surprises in his second book. It will include the most comprehensive study to date of New Testament references to homosexuality. It contains the most exhaustive analysis of early theological writings on the subject yet undertaken.

The book attempts to demonstrate that mainstream Christianity was not, in fact, hostile to homosexual behavior or feelings until after the thirteenth century, despite popular opinion to the contrary. The book points out that Christianity, even in modern times, has tended to reflect the hostility of the pwople toward gay people, rather cause it.

Some of the New Testament material will be quoted in Father John McNeill's book, The Church and the Homosexual, which will be published in the fall.

MICHELLE SUSAN RICKARD

Former milkmaid and lumberjack (sic) in Montana; high school graduate with honors; former clerk-stenographer for two years with the U.S. Information Agency in Washington; Co-chairperson of the local general conference preparations. Co-chairperson Adam DeBaugh says of his 19 year old co-worker, "Michelle is serving as the local church's coordinator for General Conference, a position which has involved an incredible amount of work and energy. She has really pulled this conference together, more than any other person in Washington."

BRUCE RAYMOND VOELLER

Executive Director of the National Gay Task Force; Ph.D., Rockefeller Institute; professor, Rockefeller Institute; author of four books and numerous full length publications in the field of biology; lecturer; born in 1934; father of three children; member of the Social Action panel for 1976 MCC General Conference.

ADAM DeBAUGH

. Mr. Adam DeBaugh has been appointed chairperson of the UFMCC Christian Social Action Commission. He is assistant director of the UFMCC Washington Office and co-chairperson of the 1976 General Conference Preparations Committee.

His experience includes a five year stint as director of a religiously funded research center in international affairs, the Center for the Study of Power and Peace in Washington, publishing a large quantity of materials, including a monograph series in book form on the People's Republic of China.

In 1975 he was administrative assistant to a United States Congressperson from Pennsylvania. He brings his research, writing, editing, and lobbying abilities to bear on the issue of gay civil rights for the first time on Capitol Hill.

He is a columnist for *The Blade*, a Washington-based gay newspaper, and serves as editor of *Gays On The Hill*, published by the UFMCC Washington Office.

During the recent Elders meeting in Washington, Mr. DeBaugh hosted a luncheon at the National Democratic Club on Capitol Hill. Honored guests included former Sgt. Leonard Matlovich and aides to legislators, Alan Cranston, and Bella Abzug.

MARY LAMBERTON STEVENS

Lesbian; mother; BA University of Massachusettes; author of numerous articles, pamphlets, briefs; past president of Rhode Island NOW; legislative specialist of the National Gay Task Force; drafted model gay civil rights act; member of MCC New York. Mary is a member of the Social Action Panel.

BETTY FAIRCHILD lives in Washington, DC, as do her son and two daughters; there, until recently, she was a writer and editor at The American University. In 1970, her son (then 17) told her he was gay, thus opening up to her some of the most painful, and later the most rewarding, experiences of her life. In March 1974, by which time she had long been comfortable with her son's sexual orientation, Betty set out to organize a Parents of Gays group in the Washington area. This group presently continues to meet once a month. As her interest in working with parents and gay epople increased, Betty decided to devote more time and energy to this cause. She has appeared on numerous radio and television programs to discuss various aspects of the parent gay/child experience, and she has spoken before many local groups, as well as in several states and Canada. Her pamphlet, *Parents of Gays*, based on insights resulting from the group's experience, has been distributed internationally. Betty is presently preparing to write a full-length book on the scope and variety of parent/gay child experiences, which will be based in part on actual correspondence which has been contributed by gay women and men and/or parents across the country.

GARY ALDRIDGE is openly gay Legislative Assistant to Senator Alan Cranston (D-Calif.). Previously, he was Program Associate for the Arts in Education Program of The JDR 3rd Fund in New York City, Staff Assistant to former Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon, and Associate Public Relations Director for the Oregon Shakespearean Festival. Aldridge is a member of the interim board of directors of the Gay Rights National Lobby.

REV. JACK ISBELL

Rev. Jack Isbell, ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal church in 1972; pastor of MCC Hawaii 1973-75; elected pastor of MCC Washington, DC in 1975; M. Division, Virginia Theological Seminary; assistant district coordinator; host pastor of the Seventh Annual General Conference.

General Conference VII Meets in Washington, DC

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, now numbering over 100 congregations in seven nations stretching across the globe from Canada to Nigeria to Australia, will meet in Washington, DC, August 10-15 for its seventh General Conference, the first to be held in the Northeast United States.

Nearly two thousand gay Christians, heterosexual MCCers, parents of gays and leaders of mainline gay religious caucuses and secular gay liberation groups will make up the MCC presence in the United States capital during the Bicentennial of the American Revolution.

"This is the year for everyone interested in human rights to affirm our right to exist with freedom and dignity in every society around the world," said the Rev. Troy Perry, moderator and founder of the seven-year old denomination which began as a single congregation meeting in his living room in Los Angeles.

Highlights of the 1976 General Conference will include a panel discussion by parents of homosexuals, a lecture by a 28 year old assistant professor of medieval history at Yale University, Dr. John E. Boswell, who will present an historical overview of the relationship of gay people and the Christian Church, a candlelight memorial service and wreath-laying on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, and an "Affirmation" rally in Lafayette Park across from the White House on Sunday afternoon, August 15.

This great outdoor meeting will be an affirmation of the right of gay people to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." "We feel," said Rev. Perry, "that, like Gay Pride rallies and parades held annually in late June, a one-day 'Affirmation' can have a profound impact on society, highlighted, as it will be, by the United States Bicentennial and observed in that nation's capital."

The conference will feature morning and evening worship services open to the public throughout its five days, culminating in a service of ordination for MCC ministers at the 1,845 seat Warner Theatre in downtown Washington on Sunday, August 15.

A social action panel on Wednesday, August 11, will include Dr. Franklin Kameny, founder of the Mattachine Society, Washington, DC; Dr. Bruce Voeller, co-executive director, National Gay Task Force, New York; David Glascock, special assistant to Los Angeles County Supervisor Ed Edelman; Sister Jeannine Gramick, Dignity chaplain and staff member, the Quixote Center, Washington; and Gary Aldridge, openly gay legislative assistant to Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA).

Business sessions and worship services, except for Sunday's ordination service, will be held at the First Congregational United Church of Christ, 10th and G Streets, NW, in downtown Washington. Conference headquarters will be at the Ambassador Hotel.

MCC General Conferences in Retrospect

Condensed from a 3500 word taped "History of MCC General Conferences" by Rev. Elder John H. Hose, pastor of MCC Tampa. (Transcribed by Jerry Knight.)

The Seventh annual General Conferences of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in Washington, DC in August 1976 is an occasion to look back over the past years in review of the general conferences which have preceded it.

I. 1970 LOS ANGELES

The first General Conference was held in borrowed property around the city of Los Angeles, using facilities that were available to us on a catch as catch can basis. The opening service was held at the Methodist Chapel on the University of Southern California campus on Friday evening with Rev. Elder John Hose as keynote speaker.

Four congregations were represented: San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. A group from Phoenix, AZ also came seeking admission to the Fellowship.

The meetings on Saturday were held in the Unitarian Church in Pasadena. Then on Sunday morning we had our first large mass service, with the massing of colors, massing of robes, and procession. This was held in the Embassy Auditorium in downtown Los Angeles. Over 600 persons attended.

All went smoothly that conference except a controversary over whether the young Fellowship should try to establish an MCC seminary. The board of elders at that time consisted of Rev. Perry, Rev. Hose, Rev. Richard Ploen, and Rev. Louis Loynes.

II. 1971 LOS ANGELES

By the time General Conference II rolled around, By Laws had been prepared, and organizational structures had been set for the development of the Fellowship. Most of the meetings were held in the newly acquired Metropolitan Community Church at Twenty-second and Union. Most of the conference was taken up with the adoption of the By-Laws. The 18 or 19 congregations assembled handled the business smoothly and were deeply inspired by the appearance of Dr. Evelyn Hooker who had served as chairperson of the Task Force on Homosexuality for the National Institute of Mental Health by appointment of U.S. President Lyndon Johnson. Her address was the highlight of conference as she spoke for more than an hour at the closing session.

III. 1972 LOS ANGELES

In 1972 the Conference was again held at the Twenty-second and Union Street Church. By this time the Fellowship had more than 40 congregations. This was the year when there was a controversy about bringing in a significant speaker from the sociological-political community. It had been proposed to bring in Willie Brown, the California State Assembly person who had spearheaded the drive to get a consenting adult law passed in that state. He spoke. (The bill was passed in 1975 and popularly known as the Willie Brown Bill.)

IN UNITY was officially established as a Fellowship magazine at that conference. The Board of National Missions was established with Rev. Lee Carlton as chairperson.

IV. 1973 ATLANTA

Probably all would agree that the most significant developments took place in Atlanta. The By-Laws were totally revised in two long arduous days of business meetings. The Faith, Fellowship, and Order Commission was established to study the doctrine and ministry of the Fellowship and report back to the 1976 General Conference. The Conference was held at the home of MCC Atlanta, a theater in the suburb of Decatur. The Fellowship now consisted of more than sixty congregations. The board of elders at the end of the conference was: Rev. Perry, Rev. Hose, Rev. Ploen, Rev. John Gill, Rev. James Sandmire, Rev. Freda Smith, and Rev. Richard Vincent. The board of elders was expanded from four to seven.

V. 1974 SAN FRANCISCO

More than seventy congregations gathered for the fifth general conference at San Francisco. For the third time in five years, Rev. Elder John Hose delivered the keynote address. A growing interest in MCC in countries around the world was in evidence at this conference. Rev. Hose and Rev. Smith were re-elected to the board of elders and Rev. Roy Birchard was elected to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Rev. Richard Ploen, dean of Samaritan Bible School. The *Handbook of Prison Ministry* was published and distributed at this conference and recognized as one of the most significant publications to be printed by any denomination.

VI. 1975 DALLAS

The Adolphus Hotel in Dallas was the site of the 1975 general conference. It was the first time we were able to hold a general conference, completely housed in one building, with all the delegates residing in the hotel, having the use of ballrooms and meeting rooms. The presence of Dr. Norman Pittenger, outstanding clergyman, author, theologian was a highlight of the religious observances of the week-long conference. Another highlight was the speech by Ms. Elaine Noble, lesbian state representative from Massachusettes. This conference was attended by a greater number of persons than any other conference, with 500 registered delegates and upwards of 2,500 people participating at one time or another. Rev. Perry was re-elected to the board of elders and Rev. Carol Cureton was elected to fill the position held by the Rev. Roy Birchard, whose term had expired. ●

AFFIRMATION '76: WHAT NEXT?

Brother Chip Garcia of Los Angeles carries the Fellowship flag in procession to open the Sunday worship service at General Conference in Dallas, 1975

by Rev. Elder John H. Hose

The future of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community churches is much on our minds as we approach our seventh General Conference in Washington, DC in August. It is significant that this is the bi-centennial year of nationhood in the United States of America. Unfortunately we tend to look backward toward what *has* happened when we observe an anniversary, rather than forward to what we hope will happen.

Having just celebrated my 62nd birthday, I know how the urge to look back enters into our minds. But I also remember the words of the late Satchel Paige: "Don't look back; whoever's chasing you may be gaining on you." Lot's wife was another who looked back; we all know what happened to her! Certainly as we go to Washington for General Conference VII, we will *affirm* many things – for our year-long conference slogan has been: AFFIRMATION '76.. We will probably create *more* study commissions, *more* committees. We will pass *more* resolutions. Is *that* what we mean by affirmation? What exactly should we be affirming?

Affirmation of our Faith in the time-honored creeds? Affirm social and political action for the oppressed? Affirm equal rights? (Didn't the Constitution of the United States do that 200 years ago?) Is not an affirmation an expression of judgment? And are not judgment and love interrelated concepts? Is not the single goal, the single purpose of *all* churches (and indeed God's purpose) to improve human relationships?

The centrality of love as the positive dynamic in all human relationships is generally presupposed in literature on the subject. Whether the writer is a psychiatrist, such as William Glasser or a theologian like Paul Tillich, love as the creative force in human relations is affirmed. Glasser states: The need to love and be loved and the need to feel worthwhile to ourselves and to others is vital to our well being. Tillich wrote: The transcendent character of the ultimate source of moral demands is love under the dominance of agape. The perspective may differ, but the basic affirmation is the same. Further, love includes and transcends the other central concept – judgment. As Tillich has pointed out in his remarkable essay on MORALITY AND BEYOND: Love, in the sense of *agape*, contains justice in itself as its unconditional element and as its weapon against its own sentimentalization. Consequently, judgment must not be seen as *violating* but as fulfilling love.

Joseph Fletcher in his essay on *Moral Responsibility* says: Love and justice are the same thing...Not only is justice Christian love but, as communication, it says it. It says what the Biblical Agape means. Tillich develops an even better, and more inclusive relationship between love and justice. Conflict occurs, Tillich has shown when a creature violates the structure of justice and so violates love itself. He wrote in *Systematic Theology*, 1951: When this happens – and it is the character of creaturely existence that it happens universally – judgment and condemnation follow...Condemnation is not the negation of love but the negation of the negation of love...Judgment is an act of love which surrenders that which resists love to self-destruction. Most of us see judgment as the experiencing of self-destruction and despair. It is more than that. Literally, judgment affirms that which creates and gives hope to the self. To relate to a person in love is already a dimension of judgment. It says, "I believe you are worth my attention." Justice when taken into love carries with it involvement.

Jesus stated that He came to fulfill the law and the prophets, but He changes; He expands; He goes beyond. He DOES NOT LOOK BACK! He affirms in a positive manner what the Law and the Prophets tend to state negatively.

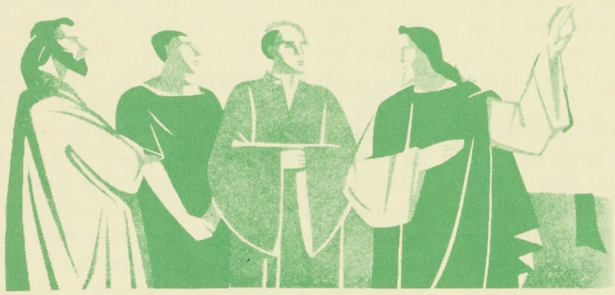
I believe, therefore, that our affirmation should indeed be a pledge to put into practice the great commandment. That we need to strive mightily to convince all humankind that LOVE and JUSTICE are synonomous; that what we are affirming for the future is our belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ, that if indeed we are constrained to "love one another," we must then "be just to one another."

It behooves us to affirm that out of necessity we became a separate member of the Body of Christ, because that body had strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but need to be dealt with justly! ●

Please turn to page 50

Proclaim Liberation in the Land

Lev.25:10



GENERAL CONFERENCE VII
WASHINGTON, DC
TUESDAY, AUGUST 10, 1976

"The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me" Luke 4:18-20 American Standard Version

8:00 — **Registration**

9:00 – 10:00 — **Morning Worship Service**

Singspiration . . . . . Bro. Ernie Richardson
Opening Prayer . . . . . Rev. David Farrell
Announcements . . . . . Rev. Richard Vincent
Welcome . . . . . Rev. Howard Gaass
Scripture (English) . . . . . Rev. Shawn Farrell
(Spanish)
Gloria
Offering
Special Music . . . . . Rev. Jay Thomas
Sermon . . . . . Rev. Jack Isbell
Institution Of the Sacrament . . . . . Rev. Keith Davis
All District Coordinators in the USA will participate in this service
Benediction . . . . . Rev. Gary Wilson

10:00 – 11:45 — **Meetings and Workshops**

Board of Institutional Ministry (USA) . . . . . Room 201
Commission on Fellowship, Faith and Order Workshop . . . . . Garden Room
Commission on Religious Orders Workshop . . . . . Room 203
Commission on Government, Structures and Systems . . . . . Chapel
Commission on Christian Social Action . . . . . Fellowship Hall
– Committee on Racism
– Committee on Human Awareness
– Task Force on Women
– Task Force on Men
Commission on Christian Education . . . . . Room 205
Publications Department . . . . . Room 209
Board of Campus Ministry . . . . . Room 202
Ministerial **Credentials and Affairs Committee** . . . . . Ambassador Hotel

11:45 – 1:30 — **Lunch**

1:30 -- 3:15 — **Meetings and Workshops**

Board of World Church Extension . . . . . Room 203
Commission on Innovative Ministries . . . . . Fellowship Hall
- Aging
- Handicapped
- Alcoholism
- Drug Abuse

By-Laws Committee . . . . . Room 209
To receive input from UFMCC members
Church Music Workshop . . . . . Garden Room
This workshop will be repeated at 10:00 AM Wednesday
Liturgies and Contemporary Worship . . . . . Chapel
A special presentation led by Rev. Stan Harris of Adelaide, Australia
This presentation will be repeated at 10:00 AM Wednesday
Small Group Experiences Workshop . . . . . Room 205
This workshop will be repeated at 3:45 PM Wednesday

3:15 – 3:45 — **Break**

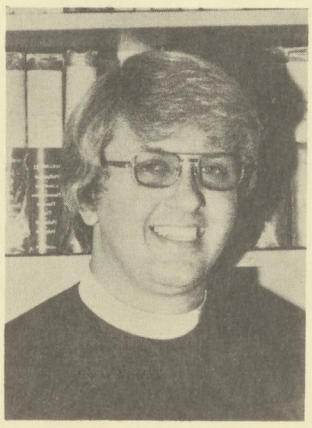
3:45 – 5:30 — **Meetings and Workshops**

Parents of Gays . . . . . Fellowship Hall
A special panel presentation led by Betty Fairchild, Washington, DC
Coordinator of Parents of Gays Organization and author of the booklet of the same name
Samaritan Theological Institute Presentation . . . . . Chapel
Workshop on Aging . . . . . Room 205
Workshop on the Handicapped . . . . . Room 203

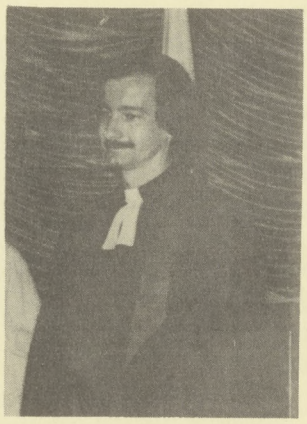
5:30 – 7:30 — **Dinner**

7:30 — **Evening Worship Service**

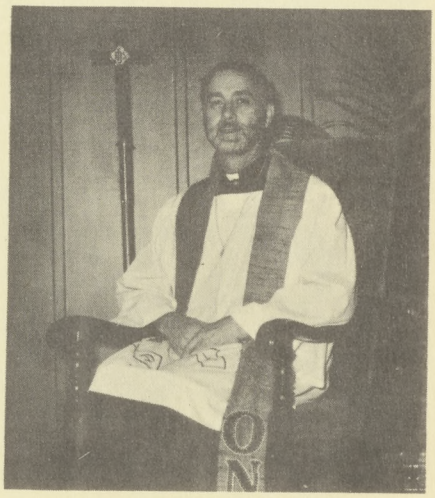
Singspiration . . . . . Bro. Ernie Richardson
Opening Prayer . . . . . Sis. Paula Turner
Announcements and Welcome . . . . . Rev. Richard Vincent
Scripture (English) . . . . . Bro. Arthur Fleschener
(Spanish)
Special Music
Offering . . . . . Rev. Donald Eastman
Hymn
Sermon . . . . . Rev. John Gill
Hymn
Benediction . . . . . Rev. Heather Anderson



The Rev. Jack Isbell, MCC Washington, DC will preach at the Tuesday morning service



The Rev. Elder John Gill, MCC Fort Lauderdale, GA will preach at the Tuesday evening service



The Rev. Elder Richard Vincent
Presiding Elder – Tuesday

Proclaim Liberation in the Land

Lev.25:10

GENERAL CONFERENCE VII
WASHINGTON, DC
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 1976

"Annointed to preach good news to the poor"
Luke 4:18-20 American Standard Version

7:45 – 8:15 — **Morning Communion Service**

Homily . . . . . Rev. Michael England
Institution of the Sacrament . . . . . Rev. Philip Speranza

8:00 — **Registration**

9:00 – 10:00 — **Morning Worship Service**

Singspiration . . . . . Bro. Bill Memmott
Opening Prayer . . . . . Bro. Edward Haugen
Announcements and Welcome . . . . . Rev. Freda Smith
Scripture (English) . . . . . Rev. Kenneth Taylor
(Spanish)
Gloria
Offering . . . . . Rev. Valerie Valrejean
Special Music
Hymn
Sermon . . . . . Rev. Charles Larson
Benediction . . . . . Rev. Stanley Roberts

10:00 – 11:45 — **Meetings and Workshops**

Board of Campus Ministry Workshop . . . . . Garden Room
Commission on Fellowship, Faith and Order Workshop . . . . . Fellowship Hall
Liturgies and Contemporary Worship Presentation . . . . . Chapel
Church Music Workshop . . . . . Sanctuary
Commission on Christian Education Workshop . . . . . Room 209
Alcoholism Workshop . . . . . Room 205
Youth Workshop . . . . . Room 201
Minister's Spouse Association . . . . . Room 203

11:45 – 1:30 — **Lunch**

1:30 – 3:30

US citizens visit their Senators and Representatives
Guests from other countries visit sights of interest in Washington DC
Film (80 minutes) on Alcoholism . . . . . Sanctuary

3:45 – 5:30

Meetings and Workshops
Drug Abuse Workshop . . . . . Garden Room
Commission on Christian Social Action . . . . . Sanctuary

A special panel discussion:
Panelists who have accepted tentative invitations to appear are:
Dr. Frank Kameny, founder of the Mattachine Society of Washington, DC
Dr. Bruce Voeller, Co-Executive Director of the Nat-Gay Task Force, NY
Mr. Dave Glascock, special Assistant to LA county Supervisor Ed Edelman
Sr. Jeannine Gramick, Dignity Chaplain, Baltimore, MD
Mr. Gary Aldrich, Legislative Assistant to Senator Alan Cranston
Rep. Bella Abzug, House of Representatives Member, NY

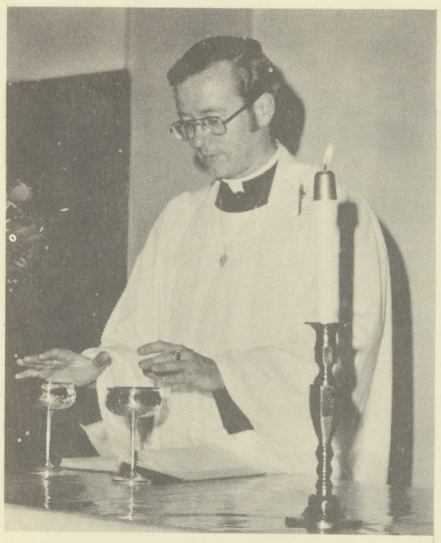
Small Group Experience Workshop . . . . . Room 205

5:30 – 7:30

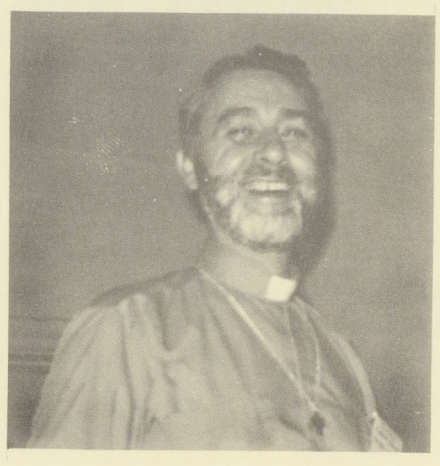
Dinner
Minister's Dinner for UFMCC professional ministers and spouses

7:30

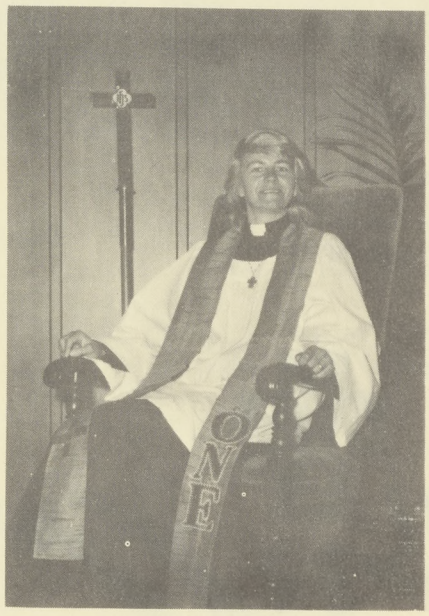
Evening Worship Service
Singspiration . . . . . Bro. Bill Memmott
Opening Prayer . . . . . Rev. F. Jay Deacon
Announcements and Welcome . . . . . Rev. Freda Smith
Scripture (English) . . . . . Sis. Valerie Bouchard
(Spanish)
Offering . . . . . Rev. Keith Davis
Special Music
Hymn
Sermon . . . . . Rev. Richard Vincent
Hymn
Benediction . . . . . Rev. Charlie Arehart



The Rev. Charles Larson
MCC San Francisco, CA
will preach at the
Wednesday morning service



The Rev. Elder Richard Vincent
Fellowship Headquarters
will preach at the
Wednesday evening service



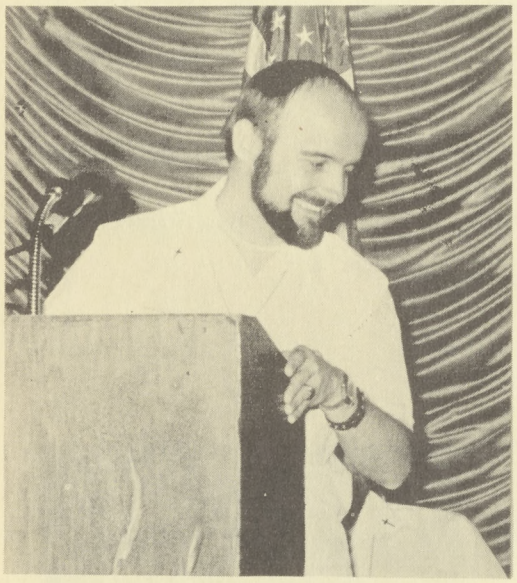
The Rev. Elder Freda Smith
Presiding Elder – Wednesday

Proclaim Liberation in the Land

Lev.25:10

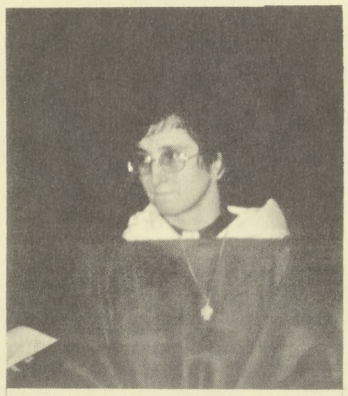
GENERAL CONFERENCE VII
WASHINGTON, DC
THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 1976

"Sent to proclaim liberation to the captives"
Luke 4:18-20 American Standard Version

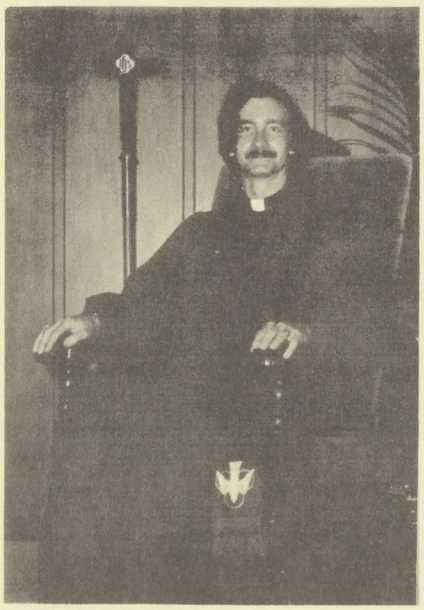


The Rev. Stan Harris
MCC Adelaide, Australia
will preach at the
Thursday evening service

Mary L. Stevens
will participate in the
Christian Social Action Panel
Wednesday, August 11 – 3:45 PM



The Rev. Nancy Wilson
MCC Detroit, Michigan
will preach at the
Thursday morning service



The Rev. Elder John Gill
Presiding Elder – Thursday

CHURCH EXTENSION

MCC proclaims God's Liberation in every land
All Coordinators of World Church Extension will participate

7:45 – 8:15 — **Morning Communion Service**
- Homily . . . . . Rev. Joan Johnson
- Institution of the Sacrament . . . . . Rev. James Hill

8:00 — **Registration**

9:00 – 10:00 — **Morning Worship Service**
- Singspiration . . . . . Rev. Jan Weymouth
- Opening Prayer . . . . . Rev. Robert Cunningham
- Welcome and Announcements . . . . . Rev. John Gill
- Scripture (English and Spanish) . . . . . Sis. Rhea Miller
- Gloria
- Offering . . . . . Rev. Gil Lincoln
- Special Music
- Hymn
- Sermon . . . . . Rev. Nancy Wilson
- Benediction . . . . . Rev. Wallace Lanchester

10:00 – 11:45 — **Conference Business Meeting**
- First Session . . . . . Fellowship Hall

11:45 – 1:30 — **Lunch**

1:30 – 5:30 — **Conference Business Meeting**
- Second Session . . . . . Fellowship Hall

5:30 – 7:30 — **Dinner**

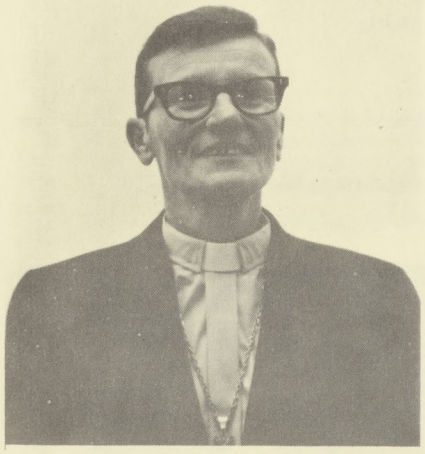
7:30 — **WORLD CHURCH EXTENSION WORSHIP SERVICE**
- Singspiration . . . . . Rev. Jan Weymouth
- Opening Prayer
- Announcements . . . . . Rev. John Gill
- Welcome . . . . . Rev. Lee J. Carlton
- Scripture (English)
  (Spanish)
- Offering
- Special Music
- Testamonies *All Coordinators of World Church Extension will participate*
- Hymn
- Sermon . . . . . Rev. Stan Harris
- Hymn
- Benediction

Proclaim Liberation in the Land

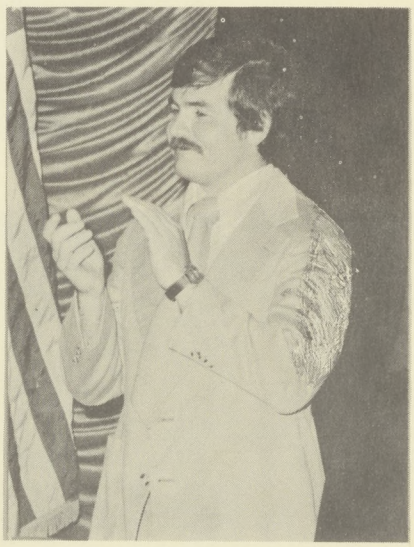
Lev.25:10

GENERAL CONFERENCE VII
WASHINGTON, DC
FRIDAY, AUGUST 13, 1976

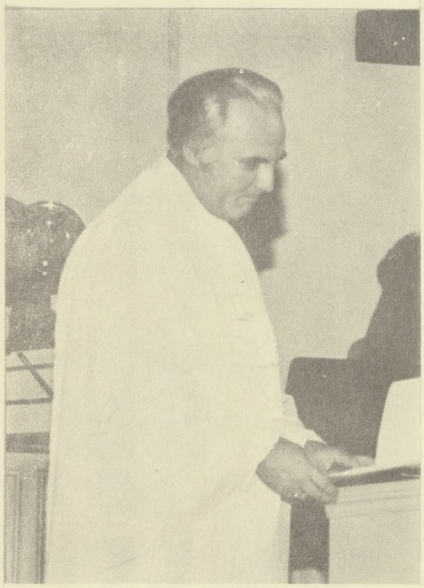
"Sent to proclaim recovery of sight to the blind"
Luke 4:18-20 American Standard Version



The Rev. Shawn Farrell
MCC Dallas, Texas
will preach at the
Friday evening service



The Rev. Howard Wells
MCC Atlanta, Georgia
will preach at the
Friday morning service



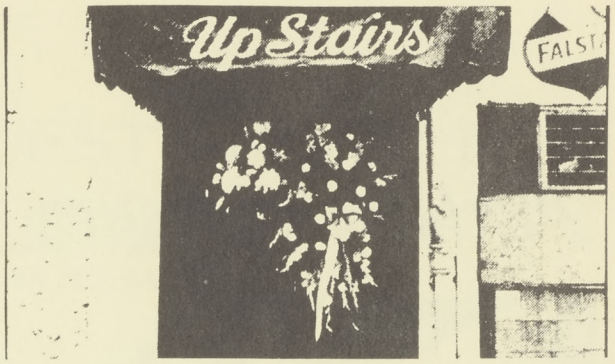
The Rev. Elder James Sandmire
Presiding Elder — Friday

MEMORIAL SERVICE

In Remembrance of all our departed

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
And let perpetual light shine upon them.
May they rest in peace. Amen.

10:30 PM AT THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL



7:45 – 8:15 — **Morning Communion Service**
- Homily . . . . . Rev. David Farrell
- Institution of the Sacrament . . . . . Rev. Jerl Harvey

8:00 — **Registration**

9:00 – 10:00 — **Morning Worship Service**
- Singspiration . . . . . Rev. Arthur Ramirez
- Opening Prayer . . . . . Sis. Rebecca Bell
- Announcements . . . . . Rev. James Sandmire
- Welcome . . . . . Rev. Roy Birchard
- Scripture (English) . . . . . Bro. Charles Beerman
  (Spanish)
- Gloria
- Offering
- Special Music
- Hymn
- Sermon . . . . . Rev. Howard Wells
- Benediction . . . . . Sis. Charlene Taylor

10:00 – 11:45 — **Conference Business Meeting**
- Third Session . . . . . Fellowship Hall

11:45 – 1:30 — **Lunch**

1:30 – 5:30 — **Conference Business Meeting**
- Fourth Session . . . . . Fellowship Hall

5:30 – 7:30 — **Dinner**

7:30 — **Evening Worship Service**
- Singspiration . . . . . Rev. Arthur Ramirez
- Opening Prayer . . . . . Rev. Ronald Pannell
- Announcements . . . . . Rev. James Sandmire
- Welcome . . . . . Bro. Adam DeBaugh
- Scripture (English) . . . . . Rev. Robert Falls
  (Spanish)
- Offering . . . . . Rev. James Sandmire
- Special Music
- Hymn
- Sermon . . . . . Rev. Shawn Farrell
- Hymn
- Benediction

10:30 — **WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY AT THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL**

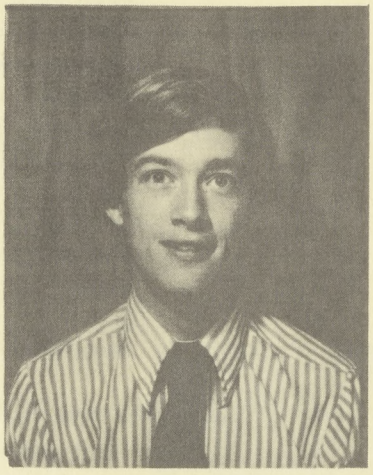
Proclaim Liberation in the Land

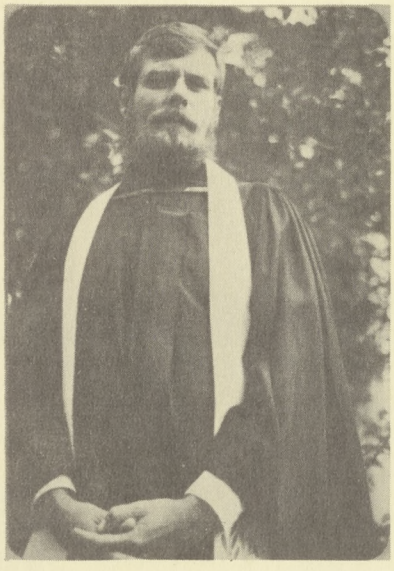
Lev.25:10

GENERAL CONFERENCE VII
WASHINGTON, DC
SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, 1976

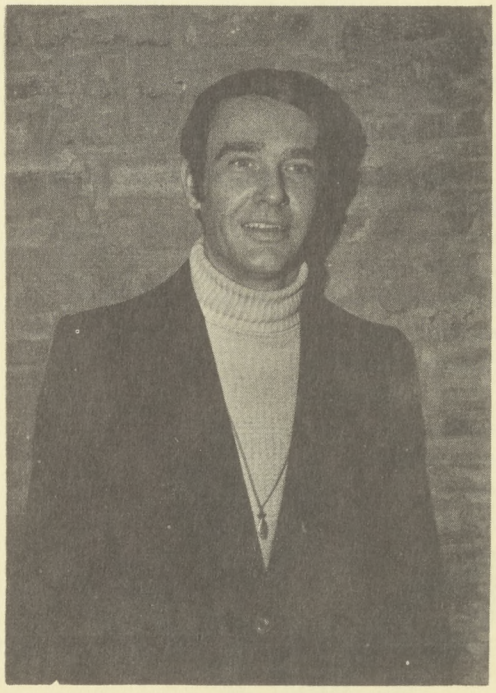
"Set to set at liberty those who are oppressed"
Luke 4:18-20 American Standard Version

Dr. John E. Boswell
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut
will speak on Saturday afternoon at 1:30

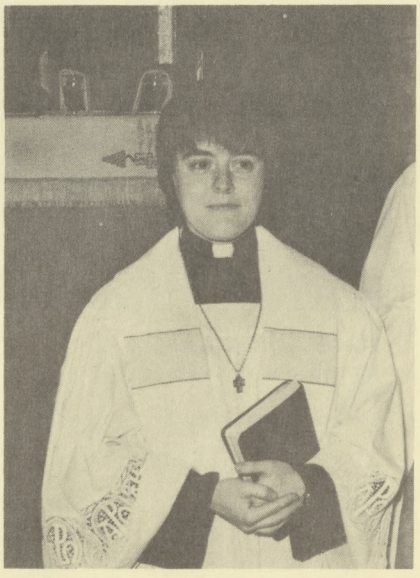




The Rev. James Snow
MCC Atlanta, Georgia
will preach at the
Saturday morning service



The Rev. Kenneth Martin
MCC Chicago, Illinois
will preach at the
Saturday evening service



The Rev. Elder Carol Cureton
Presiding Elder – Saturday

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER

"An Historical Overview – Gay People and the Christian Church"
Dr. John Boswell – Yale University
1:30 – 2:45 IN THE SANCTUARY

7:45 – 8:15 **Morning Communion Service**
Homily . . . . . Rev. Joseph Gilbert
Institution of the Sacrament . . . . . Rev. Ann Montague

8:00 **Registration**

9:00 – 10:00 **Morning Worship Service**
Singspiration . . . . . Rev. Austin Amerine
Opening Prayer . . . . . Rev. Alice Jones
Announcements and Welcome . . . . . Rev. Carol Cureton
Scripture (English) . . . . . Rev. James Glyer
(Spanish)
Gloria
Offering . . . . . Rev. Donald Borbe
Special Music
Sermon . . . . . Rev. James Snow
Benediction . . . . . Rev. Robert Sirico

10:00 – 11:45 **Conference Business Meeting**
Fifth Session . . . . . Fellowship Hall

11:45 – 1:30 **Lunch**

1:30 – 2:45 **SPECIAL PROGRAM** . . . . . Sanctuary
Dr. John E. Boswell, Assistant Professor of Medieval History at Yale University,
will present an historical overview
of the relationship of gay people and the Christian Church

3:00 – 5:30 **Conference Business Meeting**
Final Session . . . . . Fellowship Hall

5:30 – 7:30 **Dinner**

7:30 **Evening Worship Service**
Singspiration . . . . . Rev. Austin Amerine
Opening Prayer . . . . . Bro. Frank Murr
Announcements and Welcome . . . . . Rev. James Sandmire
Scripture (English) . . . . . Rev. Randall Cypherd
(Spanish)
Gloria
Offering
Special Music
Sermon . . . . . Rev. Kenneth Martin
Hymn
Benediction . . . . . Rev. Paul Peachy

AFFIRMATION '76 RALLY

12:00 – 3:00 IN LAFAYETTE PARK

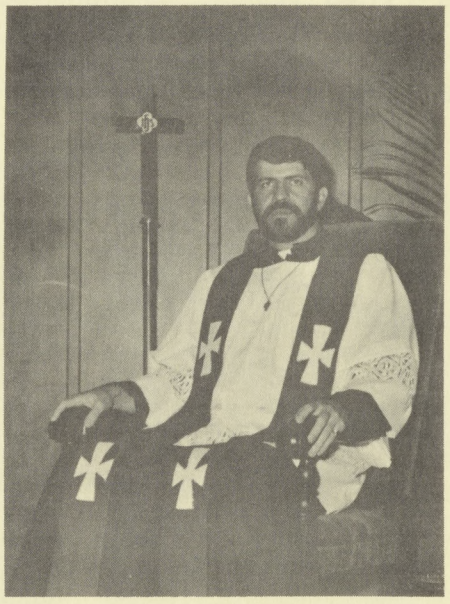
PROCLAIM LIBERATION IN THE LAND

Lev.25:10

GENERAL CONFERENCE VII
WASHINGTON, DC
SUNDAY, AUGUST 15, 1976

"Sent to proclaim the season of Jehovah's favor"
Luke 4:18-20 American Standard Version

The Rev. Troy D. Perry
Fellowship Headquarters
will preach at the
Sunday evening service



The Rev. James Sandmire
MCC Los Angeles
will preach at the
Sunday morning service

The Rev. Elder John Hose
Presiding Elder — Sunday

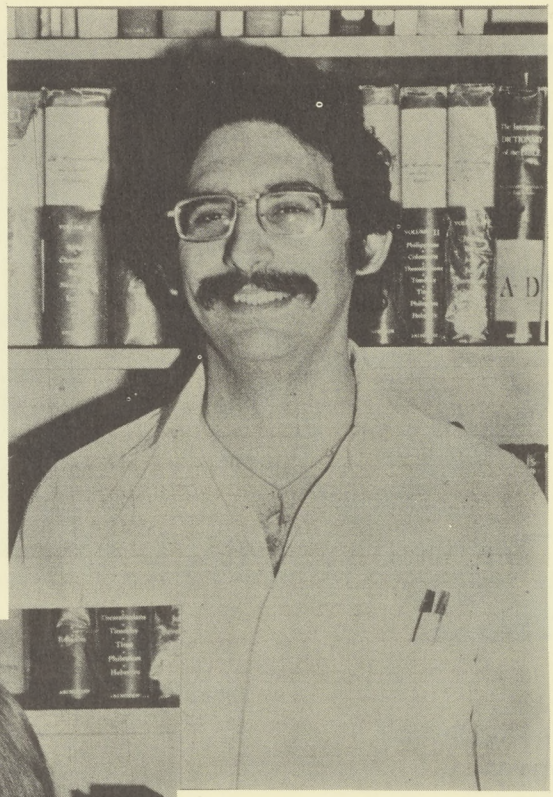
10:30 **Morning Worship Service** . . . . . Warner Theatre

Singspiration . . . . . Rev. Willie Smith
Processional
Opening Hymn
Welcome and Announcements . . . . . Rev. John Hose
Hymn
Scripture (English) . . . . . Sis. Dee Jackson
(Spanish) . . . . . Rev. Jose Mojica
Silent and Pastoral Prayer . . . . . Rev. Jose Mojica
Sung Lord's Prayer . . . . . Congregation
Special Music
Sermon . . . . . Rev. James Sandmire
Offering . . . . . Rev. Troy Perry
Sung Doxology . . . . . Congregation
The Rite of Ordination . . . . . The Board of Elders
Installation of newly-elected Elders . . . . . The Board of Elders
General Confession and Absolution . . . . . Rev. Richard Vincent
Institution of the Sacrament . . . . . Rev. Carol Cureton
Holy Communion . . . . . The Board of Elders
Benediction . . . . . Rev. John Gill
Recessional

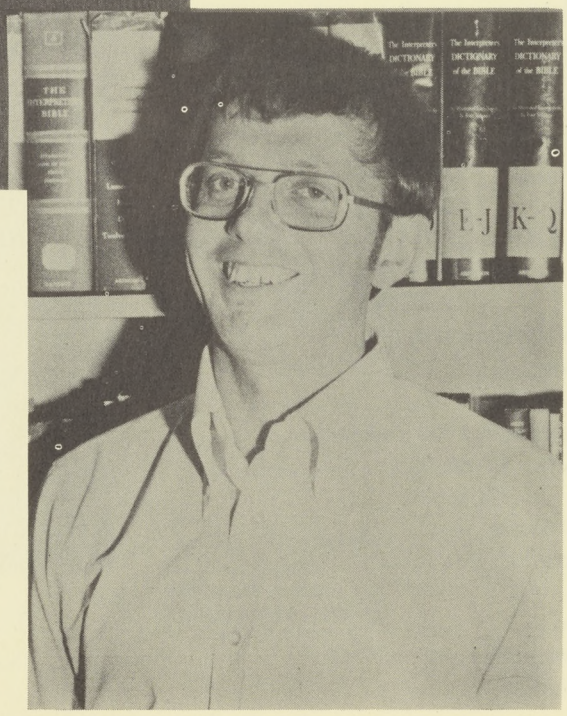
12:00 – 3:00 **AFFIRMATION 76 RALLY IN LAFAYETTE PARK**
(Across from the White House)

7:30 **Evening Worship Service**

Singspiration . . . . . Rev. Willie Smith
Opening Prayer . . . . . Rev. Sylvanus Maduka
Announcements and Welcome . . . . . Rev. John Hose
Scripture (English) . . . . . Rev. Kris Dodds
(Spanish)
Special Music . . . . . Bro. Jimmi Irving
Offering . . . . . Rev. James Sandmire
Hymn
Sermon . . . . . Rev. Elder Troy Perry
The Unending Hymn of Praise . . . . . Congregation
Benediction . . . . . Rev. Elder Troy Perry



Brother Adam DeBaugh
MCC Washington, DC



Reverend Roy Birchard
MCC Washington, DC

General Conference Arrangements

– The People Behind the People

Dozens and dozens of MCC DC members and associates have worked for months. The church newsletter has carried detailed organizational plans which have revealed to the world the feverish activity taking plan in that corner of the universe.

Behind the scenes, the people pictured here have been making those plans, organizing that work, coordinating all the preparation by the DC people.

Pastor Jack Isbell has all the joys and headaches of being the host pastor.

Coordinators of the General Conference preparations, Adam DeBaugh and Michelle Rickard have borne the major burden.

Rev. Roy Birchard, Director of the UFMCC office in Washington, has served as liaison for the board of elders in Conference arrangements and Affirmation '76 preparations.

IN UNITY is especially indebted to Adam DeBaugh and Roy Birchard for the research, writing, photographs, biographical data, and press releases for this issue of IN UNITY. Most of the General Conference information was supplied IN UNITY by the Washington, DC office. ●

Fellowship In Unity

News of the Worldwide Fellowship Family

MCC SAN DIEGO CELEBRATES SIXTH ANNIVERSARY

On June 20, MCC San Diego celebrated its sixth anniversary as a chartered church in the Fellowship.

MCC San Diego had been the first congregation to join the Universal Fellowship when the Fellowship was formed in 1970.

At the same time, the jubilant San Diegans celebrated their first anniversary in their own church home, a handsome sanctuary with adjoining offices and social hall.

A special worship service was held on Sunday at 1:00 p.m., climaxing a four day period of spiritual renewal, with guest ministers preaching at the nightly worship services.

On hand were Rev. Ed Hansen, assistant pastor of the First United Methodist Church and former pastor of the Chollas View United Methodist Church which provided a church home for MCC San Diego for several years.

MCC ministers included District Coordinator Donald Pederson, assistant pastor of MCC Los Angeles; Rev. Perry; Rev. Bob Cunningham, pastor of MCC Long Beach, who had previously served on the ministerial staff of MCC San Diego.

Rev. David Farrell, pastor of MCC San Diego, said, "What a really important day for us. It's like Thanksgiving and Christmas combined!" Rev. Farrell became District Coordinator ten days later when Rev. Pederson resigned because of the pressure of duties as assistant pastor of the largest church in the Fellowship.

The anniversary festivities included an Ox Roast Barbecue Picnic on Saturday night with many visitors from throughout the district.

In a feature article, "Sixth Anniversary: a Charter Member Looks Back," in the June 1976 *Prodigal*, Al Smithson sums up the spirit of MCC San Diego.

"Who can ever forget that next Easter when, one year ago, Rev. David announced, 'We've bought a church!' The response was thunderous – the congregation exploded with joy! The vibrance. The excitement. Then came the challenge – could we raise $15,000 in 40 days?

We did it!

Here we are today – one year later – our own church home – and isn't it beautiful! Six years old today, and we've come of age. Attendance has doubled in the last two years – collections tripled. A credit to the Fellowship. A choir unequalled in any MCC anywhere. A superbly capable ministerial staff of Deacons and Exhorters. Our Board of Directors. Our beloved Rev. David.

But, above all, the best congregation in the whole wide world!"

Rev. Elder Troy Perry preaches at the Sixth Anniversary Celebration of the founding of Metropolitan Community Church of San Diego, California. June 20, 1976. Please see additional photo on page 45.

MCC COMES TO ARKANSAS

The Board of Home Missions of the South-Central District, in a special extension of its May 20th meeting, voted unanimously to grant study group status to our brothers and sisters who have been meeting in Fayetteville-West Fork, Arkansas.

Through the dedication of three of our sisters (fondly known as the "Bear Family") the group presented their petition with ten signatures. Ms. Jan Reeder was appointed Worship Coordinator.

This is our first study group in Arkansas, and the Fellowship adds another state to those where MCC is on the move.

"We ask your prayers for this, our newest body of believers," writes District Coordinator, Rev. Shawn Farrell.

MCC NEW YORK CELEBRATES FOURTH ANNIVERSARY

MCC New York, recalling its founding in 1972 by the Rev. Howard Wells, celebrated its fourth anniversary in April with Rev. Troy Perry present as honored guest for the anniversary festivities. Rev. Wells, now pastor of MCC Atlanta, was succeeded by the Rev. Roy Birchard, now Director of the Universal Fellowship Washington, D.C. office.

The Rev. Gil Lincoln, present minister of the New York congregation, says, "We must win people to Christ and we must grow together in the Holy Spirit...It is Christ who works in us.

We are filled with holy joy to go forward in the faith that Christ will do what Christ has always done: work out God's victory for and with and in God's people."

MCC FT. LAUDERDALE IMPROVES BUILDING, SPIRIT

The new pastor, the Rev. Elder John Gill, and the members of MCC Ft. Lauderdale, FL are working together to improve their building and at the same time they are growing in spirit and in unity.

We read about it in their newsletter, *The Sunburst.*

"Many hands have touched the church to lend a little refinement, a touch of cleanliness, and a bit of symmetry, and the spirit behind this movement is love.

"MCC Ft. Lauderdale is experiencing a great sweep of joy as individuals, and indeed, the group as a whole, is eagerly looking for the beauty and dignity so appropriate to the faith which MCC proclaims.

"Much more work is to be done, but it all seems like a pleasure in the midst of this spirit of excitement. In the years to come, hopefully, people will look back with fondness on this time when the spirit moved and so many willing hands answered."

Pastor Gill now counts an active membership of 63 in the Ft. Lauderdale congregation.

MCC VENTURA FEATURED IN NEWSPAPER SERIES

Rev. Virgil Scott is pastor of the congregation of 50-60 women and men in the coastal city of Ventura, some 60 miles north of Los Angeles.

In April and May the Ojio County News ran a series of eight articles about the gay community. One of them talks of Rev. Scott's ministry in general. It was entitled "Off Beat Church. God loves gays." The surprisingly frank, objective, and complete article begins 16 of its paragraphs "OFF BEAT in that...it performs Holy Unions," "it recognizes sexuality as a gift of God...it seeks equal rights for homosexuals...it helps parents of gays to understand and accept...it negates fears that homosexuals are child molesters...it wants to air the subject of gayness...it was the only church in the country that gave free dinners on Thanksgiving Day, 797 to be exact...it literally practices the life it preaches..."

The other articles was "Church Welcomes Gay Weddings." The article described a Holy Union. "Asked why she wanted a ceremony like this, one of the women united in Holy Union answered: 'Because we are religious we believe with God's blessing of our Holy Union, it becomes more sacred; because we want to publicly announce our love and share this with our friends."

MCC NEW YORK HELPS START GAY RELIGIOUS COUNCIL

MCC New York, MCC Brooklyn, MCC Hispana, and MCC Westchester have joined with Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, Dignity, Integrity, Lutherans Concerned, and the Church of the Beloved Disciple to form the Gay Religious Council. "What is emerging is a wonderful sense of unity, and fellowship...We are achieving a togetherness which is impervious to the stupid divisiveness of the past. We are enlarging our religious impact, making more meaningful our cooperation with social, political groups in the gay community," said Rev. Gil Lincoln, pastor of MCC New York.

(*The Mustard Seed*
MCC New York, June 1976)

THE REV. HOWARD GAASS, pastor of MCC Baltimore, MD, received his pilot's license on April13, 1976. "I plan to use the license," he writes, "to fly to the various churches in the district whenever possible. I believe this makes me the first flying District Coordinator in the Fellowship!"

MCC HARTFORD SEEKS NEW CHURCH HOME

MCC Hartford was turned down by a Hartford Congregational church after an MCC task force presented a plea for building space to the administrative board.

The Asylum Hill Congregational Church board voted 12-5 that "the issue of gay Christians was too inflammatory to be handled now."

Pastor F.Jay Deacon and the task force are now studying the possibility of leasing an unused structure on the premises of a friendly church in Hartford.

MCC DETROIT DENIED COMMUNICATION WITH DETROIT CHURCH COUNCIL

Co-pastors Heather Anderson and Nancy Wilson of MCC Detroit have received word from the Christian Communications Council of Detroit that there is to be no communication with them.

This Detroit "council of churches" flatly refuses even to meet with the MCC pastors to discuss their application for membership in the council.

Ironically, right next door in Toledo, OH, the Toledo council of churches, on its own initiative, invited the Toledo MCC congregation and admitted it to their council without a dissenting vote. (Cf IN UNITY, May 1976, page 42.)

"But," commented the Detroit pastors, "our God is always victorious. If we are patient and faithful, we know that God can do anything, and will work through us."

(*The Way*, MCC Detroit, May 1976)

MCC HARTFORD HOLDS MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR NAZI VICTIMS

MCC Hartford conducted a memorial service on June 24 in commemoration of the 250,000 homosexuals put to death in Nazi concentration camps in the 30's and 40's.

By focusing on the historical truth which has been systematically ignored by historians, MCC Hartford, and its pastor F. Jay Deacon, hoped to provide a consciousness-raising experience.

The governor, mayor, other elected officials, church and synogogue groups were invited to attend. Many responded politely. Many did not.

Although a quarter of a million homosexuals were murdered by the fascists because of their sexuality, the exact number will never be known. Many were summarily executed without even being sent to the concentration camps.

This was where the pink triangle began. In Nazi concentration camps, every prisoner was identified by an emblem indicating the reason for being there (Jew, Gypsy, communist, homosexual). The identifying sign for Jews was a yellow star.

The emblem for homosexuals was a pink triangle, about two and three fourths inches high worn on left side of the jacket and on the right leg of the trouser.

The Hartford memorial service for the homosexual victims was attended by more than 60 persons, was covered by television, radio, and the newspapers.

ELDERS SANDMIRE AND PERRY PREACH RENEWAL IN CHICAGO

MCC Chicago held its annual spiritual renewal in June with the Rev. Elders James Sandmire and Troy Perry preaching each evening, Thursday through Sunday.

Good Shepherd Parish, MCC Chicago, one of the fastest growing congregations in the Fellowship, now numbers well over 200 members, with an average Sunday attendance also of nearly 200.

The Chicago church is deeply involved in a wide range of Christian social action works. They define themselves as "a Christian community called out of the world to take a stand on issues and to make our voice heard for justice for all people. This is what a Christian community is all about.

"The church is not just a place where we meet on Sundays...We must assume the Christian life style seven days a week, 24 hours a day. We are called to be Christ for and in the world today."

SOUTHEAST DISTRICT CONFERENCE ESTABLISHES PLANNING COMMISSION

Ninety-seven persons officially registered for this Conference, and 7-10 persons participated on an in and out basis, establishing an all-time high for actual delegations. The figure was impressive because it did not benefit from the presence of a local congregation to increase attendance. This is the first week-end Spiritual Retreat conference conducted by the Southeast District of the UFMCC. One may gage the success of the conference by the unanimous vote of those present to have it become an annual event to be held in the beautiful campground at Avon Park. We are especially grateful to our hosts – the United Church of Christ who own and operate Lake Byrd Lodge.

Six workshops were available for the participants, and each reported active and meaningful sessions:

COMTEMPORARY WORSHIP Rev. Evan St. Ives and Exhorter Art Fleschner, facilitators.

THE THEOLOGY OF HOLY UNION - Rev. Elder John Gill, facilitator.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS - Rev. Don Johnson, Pres. National Council of Community churches and Dennis Young, facilitators.

FAITH, FELLOWSHIP & ORDER Rev. Howard Wells, facilitator.

SEXUALITY - Rev. Jim Snow, and Dr. Lanny Dykes, facilitators.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES - Richard Romanski, facilitator.

In addition to very meaningful participation in the workshops, the services of worship, along with the wonderful recreational fellowship, the Conference was marked with the receiving of a love offering of $50 for Charlene Taylor, worship coordinator of our Memphis study group and $200 which was sent to our struggling young women pastors in Salt Lake City.

The most significant action of the conference was the adoption of a resolution to establish a planning commission for the District, whose task it would be to work during the coming year toward developing some guide-lines as to just where MCC will be and should be going in its Ministry and Outreach. The Rev. Evan St. Ives and Exh. Arthur Fleschner were appointed co-chairmen of this committee.

(from *The Crusader*,
MCC Tampa, July 1976)

ADAM DeBAUGH VISITS EASTERN, MID WESTERN CHURCHES

R. Adam DeBaugh, assistant director of the UFMCC Washington office, visited 21 MCC congregations in May and June in a campaign to alert MCC members and gay people in general to the importance of becoming politically active. He traveled from New England to Chicago on a four-week tour, stopping at MCC's all along the way.

In most of the places he visited he met with persons in small rap groups where they talked about things a person at home can do to help our gay rights lobbyists in Washington.

DeBaugh stressed letter writing as the best way to reach legislators. He said that people should remember that elected officials are "not your boss. You are their boss. Keep on them."

The 28 year old lobbyist said the best way to get them to pay attention to your letters is to make them as personal as possible. Information of your personal experiences makes a letter worth reading. According to DeBaugh the federal gay rights bill, HR 5452, has not gone anywhere because a lot of members of congress still think they don't have any gay people in their district. A few hundred letters from their district could convince them, if they believe in the iceberg phenomenon.

He reminds people that another way to get to members of congress is to call their district office and make an appointment to see them the next time they are in town.

Copies of all letters to members of congress should be sent to the Washington Office. These are appropriately filed and taken when the lobbyists visit the congress persons. If the lawmaker says "the gays never write," the lobbyist has the file to show the fact.

Adam was interviewed and featured in a column along with his photo in the *Akron Beacon Journal* while he was visiting Akron, OH.

In the interview DeBaugh said, "It is especially important for MCC to stand up and be counted where the oppression of gay men and women is the issue. We look just like other people. The result is that gay oppression is subtle."

The article quoted DeBaugh on the functions of the UFMCC office in Washington, "It functions mainly to educate gays on what's going on in Congress and to urge them to confront their representatives on the need for civil rights legislation for homosexuals.

"The MCC Washington office is also a liaison to other denominations and their gay caucuses, educates congress on gays and oppression and serves pastorally on Capitol Hill. A significant number of congressional staff people are gay," DeBaugh said.

"Because we are an invisible minority, congress members are unaware of the size of the gay population in their districts and the extent of discrimination."

SOUTHWEST DISTRICT CONFERENCE TAKES FORM of RETREAT IN THE MOUNTAINS

The Rev. Donald Pederson, District Coordinator, hosted the annual spring retreat, and district conference at Cottontail Ranch in the Santa Monica Mountains on the Memorial Day weekend.

Rev. Troy Perry preached Friday and Saturday nights, and Exhorter Brenda Hunt preached Sunday morning.

MCC OF THE TWIN CITIES URGES DEFEAT OF S-1

The board of MCC of the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis voted to write letters to Minnesota senators urging defeat of the repressive Senate Bill One (S-1), the Nixon-Mitchell rewrite of the U.S. Criminal Code.

MCC of the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis describes itself as a "Christian church, like the first Christian churches in the Book of Acts...made up of people from all traditions, 40% from high church traditions (such as Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran), 40% from evangelical traditions (such as Baptist, Pentecostal), and 20% from more liberal religious traditions. The typical worship service offers something from each of these.

"MCC is offering to all a very unique gift of liberation through Jesus Christ...offering His love, His care, His salvation to all who want it."

They also have had trouble finding a place where they are welcome to worship. "Does everyone remember the negotiations that were underway with Hennipin Avenue United Methodist church? You remember we hoped to use their chapel for worship services. Then if you recall, negotiations fell apart when their board of administration decided our church was closed to heterosexuals. This was an idea startling to all of us, most especially those heterosexuals who worship with us. Our board voted to hold a protest demonstration some weeks ago, though nothing ever came of the idea. A motion was made at our last board meeting to send the Hennepin Methodists an arrangement of flowers as a kind of 'turn thee other cheek' measure,' but that motion was defeated. What do you think? "They asked their members in their newsletter. "Would you like to see the board take some kind of action about the Methodists? Let us know."

They report "We've started something new at board meetings. After the pastor calls the meeting to order, he reads from the Bible and comments on the text. We then all pray silently for a few minutes, and then we begin our business meeting. It really helps to start the meeting with a special kind of concentration. It reminds everyone of the most important person on our board – Jesus Christ."

The Epistles, MCC of the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. June and July issues, 1976.

MCC JACKSONVILLE TO PURCHASE BUILDING

Eager to have a place of their own from which to worship, witness, and work for the Lord, MCC Jacksonville, FL got things off to a serious start recently.

They found a suitable building. They needed $4000 for a down payment. The Rev. Elder Papa John Hose preached a spiritual renewal for them. They held a congregational meeting. The entire amount was pledged at the congregational meeting on the spiritual renewal weekend.

(*Crusader*, MCC Tampa, May 1976)

MCC TAMPA CELEBRATES FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Rev. Troy Perry, former pastor Rev. Lee Carlton, and former pastor, Rev. Charles Larsen will be present to celebrate with Pastor John Hose and the MCC Tampa congregation their fifth anniversary as a chartered church on August 1, 1976.

By that time they will have installed new pews, rejuvenated the air conditioning in both of their buidings, the choir will be "more magnificent than ever," and they will come together to "praise God for all the many blessings bestowed on them."

(*Crusader*, MCC Tampa, May 1976)

DIGNITY SHOWS FRIENDSHIP WITH CASH FOR WASHINGTON OFFICE

The Board of Consultors of the National Office of Dignity voted recently to show their support for the Washington office of the Universal Fellowship by sending a donation for that work.

The letter dated June 15, 1976, contained a check for $210.00. $200.00 was from the Dignity National office and the extra $10.00 was a donation from the the Miami Chapter of Dignity.

The letter was signed by Paul Diederich, International President in behalf of the International offices and staff. This show of friendship is particularly significant in view of the known lack of surplus funds in the Dignity office. Almost simultaneously an appeal went out to all friends of Dignity to help support the splendid work Brian McNaught is doing as International chairperson of Dignity's social action programs.

Adam DeBaugh, assistant chairperson of the MCC Washington office, commented on the generous contribution from Dignity, "We are extremely grateful to Dignity for the support they have shown for the work the Universal Fellowship is doing in Washington. It is with support and contributions like this that the Washington office can grow and expand its outreach."

Dignity, an international organization of gay Catholics, is organized to unite all gay Catholics, to develop leadership, and to be an instrument through which the gay Catholic may be heard by the church and society.

Included in the Dignity statement of position and purpose is the following, "As members of Dignity we wish to promote the cause of the gay community. To do this, we must accept our responsibility to the church, to society, and to the individual gay Catholic...To society – to work for justice and social acceptance through education and social reform...We wish to work with other homophile groups for the cause of justice to the gay community and for promotion of a sense of solidarity."

The text of the letter from the Dignity National Office follows.

DENVER 1977
TORONTO 1978
LOS ANGELES 1979

ECUMENISM IN STOCKTON

On the weekend of May 21-23 Stockton MCC Mission hosted the Northwest District Conference. Besides several fine workshops, messages and sharings, there were two rather special happenings. "We were privileged to have as our speaker on Saturday evening, Father Larry Tozzeo, O.F.M., chaplain of the Sacramento chapter of Dignity.

The other special happening was the ecumenical kindness of a local Christian Church. "Because our church building in Stockton is rather small, we used the First Christian Church for the entire conference. The Sunday morning service was conducted by MCC with First Christian sharing in worship and Communion."

In preparation for the service First Christian announced in the local paper that MCC would be conducting the service; our speaker, Rev. Anne Montague was billed on the bulletin board outside the church and our order of worship was printed in their bulletin. Following the service a former pastor of First Christian was honored at a reception in which we all took part.

If external signs have any truth in them, these extra kindnesses and the smiles, tears, and warm words, revealed respect, love, and unity among 200 members of Christ's Body."

(From a letter
from Eileen Steicher)

SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT REPORTS HARD WORKING CONFERENCE

The South-Central District Conference convened Friday morning, May 21st, in Oklahoma City. Representatives from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana shared in the worship services, the workshops, and the Saturday business meeting. The theme was *Liberation in Love.*

The Conference voted unanimously to form a Missionary Evangelisn Task Force which will report back to the District in October when our next meeting will be held in Dallas, Texas. The purpose of this task force is to set up material for the expansion of MCC in our area. It will pinpoint target cities, do feasibility studies with advance public relations and advertising; and finally where response is good, to set up a series of evangelical services utilizing the preaching and musical talents of the District bodies already formed.

It was the consensus of the Conference that from this kind of outreach, combining our efforts to reach our brothers and sisters, new study groups will be formed. We feel, also, that these young bodies will understand they are not alone, and will have, from their inception, more support and knowledge of the District in which they are formed. It will be a team effort involving all churches, missions, and study groups now in the District.

Rev. Elder Troy Perry was present for the Conference and delivered the closing sermon.

During his visit, Rev. Perry preached in five of the nine cities which have a work active.

District Bylaws were revised, exchange of educational material was agreed upon; and we learned that if, indeed, Christ freed us by His love, we are called to preach *and practice* that freedom for all people.

Special commendations to the pastor and staff of Christ the King MCC in Oklahoma City for the great job they did hosting the Conference.

The Rev. Shawn Farrell is District Coordinator.

MCC SAN JOSE STILL CENTER OF CONTROVERSY

Seven months after being admitted as a member of the Santa Clara County Council of Churches, MCC San Jose is still the center of controversy in the northern California community.

The First United Methodist Church has resigned from the council because MCC was admitted. The 75-member administrative board voted 2-1 to withdraw even though the church was a charter member of the council formed in the mid 1930's.

In accepting MCC into membership last fall, the majority of council members agreed that MCC met the criteria for membership: acceptance of Jesus Christ as Divine Lord and Savior and an agreement to join in the cooperative ministries of the council.

"The tradition of the council has been to accept in love any church into membership...[who meets these criteria] intentionally avoiding any other grounds for passing judgment," said an officer of the council at the time.

Since then, six other churches are known to have resigned, but other churches have increased their support of the council and their friendship with MCC.

The Rev. William Chapman, pastor of MCC San Jose, told IN UNITY that the controversy has generated considerable publicity in the local press, particularly in the San Jose Mercury. (Cf. IN UNITY, March 1976, p.9.)

MCC PITTSBURGH CONTINUES BIBLE STUDY, RAP SESSION

Under the guidance of worship coordinators Cliff Turpin and Frank Scott, MCC Pittsburgh presses onward toward chartering as a church.

With more than 25 potential members now, the drive is on for the last few needed to seek chartering. "Here is a solid group," said one observer, "which has been growing steadily as Christians in their weekly worship services, Bible study, and rap sessions."

MCC Pittsburgh, now a mission, plans to seek chartering as a church early in 1977.

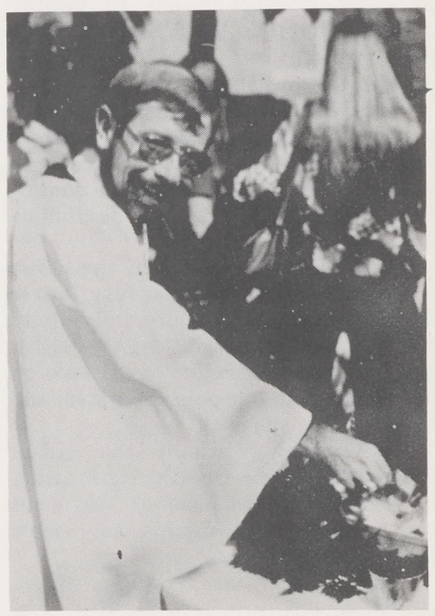
GREAT LAKES DISTRICT CONFERENCE ATTENDED BY 220

MCC Detroit hosted the Great Lakes District Conference which was held in Detroit at the end of May.

Some 220 people gathered for worship, work shops, sharing, and business.

The Rev. Jay Thomas, former pastor of MCC Cincinnati, is District Coordinator.

Revs. Heather Anderson and Nancy Wilson are co-pastors of the host church.



Rev. David Farrell, pastor of MCC San Diego

MCC NEW YORK HOSTS DEMOCRATIC DELEGATES

On July 11, 1976, MCC New York was host to the Democratic National Convention.

Their hospitality suite, located in the New York Hilton, was the first effort of its kind in gay rights history.

All the openly gay delegates to the convention made an appearance, including Jo Daly and Jim Foster of San Francisco and Calyton Wells of Los Angeles. Jean O'Leary, New York delegate stopped by after the women's caucus and extended her best wishes to those assembled. The twelve hours of operation was the culmination of several months effort and planning by the social action committee of the New York church and typifies the emergence of their deep commitment to gay civil rights.

Visitors to the suite, which contained displays portraying various ministries, covered the whole spectrum of human experience. Copies of IN UNITY were distributed as well as other UFMCC publications.

Perhaps the surprise of the day were those deeply closeted gay delegates who sought out the suite as a haven of understanding and fellowship. Most seemed to leave with a new concept of gay pride.

Also gratifying were visits by local political candidates and straight couples who had identified with what is basically a question of civil rights.

The suite was not the only scene of activity, however. Teams were sent out to other delegate hotels to inform, question, improve gay visibility. Reactions varied, but were more often positive than negative.

An MCC exhorter, Teddy Doohan, sent to the women's caucus, received sound approval and many assurances of support. This is not surprising coming from people all too aware of discrimination.

MCC officials, pleased by the suite's acceptance, planned similar functions in the near and distant future, not only to educate the public on the gay rights question, but to educate gay people on the workings of our political system and how it can be changed.

Rev. Roy Birchard and Adam DeBaugh from the UFMCC Washington, DC Office were on hand to help greet the delegates and discuss gay rights issues with them.

The project was coordinated by Bob Miehl, chairperson of the MCC New York social action committee.

REV. LANCHESTER AND SEATTLE MCC FEATURED IN SEATTLE GAY NEWS

The April issue of the *Seattle Gay News* carried a photo feature story about Pastor Wallace Lanchester and the work of the Seattle MCC.

The story tells of deacon and exhorter training program, the church newsletter, *Paraclete*, the choir, membership classes, the prison outreach program into city, county, state, and federal prisons. It tells of the Gay AA program, the deacon's closet, and the women's group.

"The church has missions in Victoria, British Columbia, Mt. Vernon and Bellingham, WN. Rev. Lanchester extends a fraternal hand to all gay organizations, makes numerous appearances before groups such as at Seattle Pacific College, and represents MCC on the Council of Churches."

The Rev. Wallace Lanchester
Pastor, MCC Seattle, Washington
Photo — Seattle Gay News

MCC ILLIAMO GROWING UNDER GUIDANCE OF ST. LOUIS

Quincy, IL is now the home of MCC Illiamo. They have been assigned to the mid central district, working under guidance of MCC St. Louis, where Rev. Elder Carol Cureton is pastor.

Recently Exhorter Ted Hall of Chicago traveled the long distance to Quincy to conduct a Sunday service in the absence of Worship Coordinator Reid Christensen. "We enjoyed Ted's visit very much, " it was reported.

The bookstore in the northwest corner of the Fireside Room is a popular place. Social activities are held regularly.

They now have, in addition to their bookstore and cheerful air conditioned sanctuary, a furnished study for the pastor and a mimeograph machine (which produces their attractive newsletter, *The Lamplighter*).

(*The Lamplighter*, MCC Illiamo
May and July issues 1976)

REV. DAVID FARRELL SUCCEEDS REV. DONALD PEDERSON AS DISTRICT COORDINATOR

The Rev. Donald Pederson announced in a letter to all congregations in the southwest district that he was resigning as district coordinator, effective July 1, 1976.

He cited the pressure of his duties as assistant pastor of MCC Los Angeles as the reason for his resignation. He indicated that he had spent 27 days away from work in the local church in the last six months, including eight Sundays in carrying out his obligations as district coordinator.

He indicated that his presence and work in Los Angeles were especially needed because of the demands upon Pastor James Sandmire's time for his duties as elder and Fellowship treasurer.

"I have tried to serve the district in the best way I know how and have counted it a blessing," he wrote, "I feel confident that my assistant, Rev. David Farrell, whom I appointed in April, will do a fine job as district coordinator."

Bicentennial Thoughts

Reprinted by permission from Christianity and Crisis, March 29, 1976

Al Carmines/James W. Fraser

THERE ARE SOME DOCUMENTS—some statements of human ideals and human experience—that seem to transcend all other statements. They are luminous with human dignity and aspiration, and their glow lasts for a long time. The Book of Job, the dialogues of Plato, Oedipus Rex, Hamlet, the Magna Charta, the Gettysburg Address—these are all permanent witnesses to what human beings have dreamed of and struggled with through the years.

The Declaration of Independence is also such a statement. True, it does not have the literary or dramatic power of some others: Its language is not mythical or religious; it is not poetic in the highest sense. Yet, perhaps because of its very terseness, its bony elegance of language, its incredible and hard to dismiss sincerity and its compression of such ardent feelings into such legal terminology, it can still fire the blood. It is an enduring human document.

One of the problems with such masterpieces is that, fertile as they are for us, the moment they are turned into absolute, airtight codes of revelation and conduct, the moment they are not allowed to breathe, they cease to be illuminating and liberating. They become prisons. For their very greatness is in their humanity, and therefore they are imperfect even in their greatness, finite even in their depth. When we do not allow them their human context, they lose also their human power. Like awkward dinosaurs, unable to make the evolutionary adaptation to continuing life, they stumble through the world of ideas, graceless and anachronistic. This is what literalists do to the Bible, what Communists do to Marx, what Lutherans do to Luther and what Methodists do to Wesley. And it is often what patriots do to the Declaration of Independence.

And so when we talk about the power of the Declaration of Independence we must talk also about what has happened since the 18th century—events that call into question not the sincerity, hope and honesty of Jefferson and those first patriots but the very assumptions upon which they wrote.

Darwin, Freud and Marx

There are three persons whose discoveries and insights into the human condition have profoundly altered what we know about ourselves and the world since the Declaration was so boldly set forth in 1776. Darwin, Freud and Marx have shown us qualities about human life that surely the Founding Fathers would draw upon, much as they drew upon Thomas Paine and John Locke in that day, were they setting forth their passionate statement now.

The 18th century was a century, in general, of enormous certainty and quasi-chauvinism about man. Man was seen as the rational, glorious apex of God's creation. (Woman was, unfortunately, seen as a little lower.) Animals, plants, the air, the water—the universe—all existed for use, experimentation and exploitation by glorious, rational,

wise, perfectible man. Man was nature's golden boy, and his possibilities were seen as unlimited. Above all man was *unique*. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all *men* are created equal (italics added)." And to them that was what the ball game was about: man, the crown of creation.

Then, a hundred years later, came Charles Darwin. Darwin envisioned a web of life that all are part of, a web woven not only through space but through time as well. Suddenly the qualitative uniqueness of man was called into question. It became just conceivable that we were only part (perhaps not even the most important part) of a long and vast story of life. We came to realize soberly that we did not spring full-blown from the head of Zeus but emerged as only a part of the time and space tapestry of being.

Many of our problems with the environment stem directly from those human-centered beliefs of the 18th century and an insufficient absorption of Darwin's great discovery. For we are part of nature—not above it—and therefore we may not lord it over our fellow beings in ruthless and arrogant ways. It is Darwin, finally—and all that his insights have set loose—who tells us that only a cosmic humility on our part can save our physical planet.

How shocking such a notion would have been to the thinkers of the 18th century. Only one other would have disturbed them more deeply, a notion given substance by Sigmund Freud: that we are not in total control of our own minds. How painful such an idea would have been to the rational, mind-worshipping 18th century. For their belief in the mind was not tempered by any doubt that rationality would eventually solve all the problems of conduct and behavior that had tormented human beings through the centuries. To take away this bastion of hope for the future would have been heresy indeed.

But just as we discovered through Darwin that we are part of an enormous chain of being stretching further than we can see, so Freud opened another and equally vast world—a world where battles are fought, where victories and defeats are experienced, and where cataclysm is constantly occurring, silently and invisibly, but with an absolute influence on the events of all history.

The world of the mind is a wilderness that still daunts us, and yet this Freudian revolution is crucial in our understanding of even those Declaration signers in 1776. Otherwise we will never begin to understand how over one-third of all those delegates to that first national convention could as a matter of course exclude black men and all women from their aspirations for a free humanity. The solution and understanding of that moral schizophrenia is possible only with some understanding of the uncharted regions of the self. Freedom seemed a rather straightforward thing to the patriots of the 18th century: If you were white, if you were male, if you had some land, then political freedom was your due.

And only in the dark recesses of Melville and Hawthorne, in the ravings of the Europeans Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, did people begin to ponder how deep and how complex was the concept of freedom. Through Freudianism we began to explicate what saints and seers had hinted at from the beginning: that there might be a freedom that chains could not take away—and a bondage that could exist even on a throne.

The pioneering forays of Freud into the way human nature is capable of extraordinary self-deception found its most ironic explication in the writings of Karl Marx.

I spent my high school years in the McCarthy era. The name Karl Marx was tantamount to the devil in my home town—a name to frighten the innocent and upright with associations of limitless evil and crafty godlessness. And so when, in the course of time, I was given *Das Kapital* as a college assignment, my voice trembled slightly as I asked for the copy from the reference librarian. Today, defanged, he seems a rather remote intellectual whose genius was to understand one facet of human nature brilliantly. Marx knew and insisted to all of us a truth that still gives us anxiety: that nothing is finally so embarrassing, so close to the bone, so barometric of us as our attitude toward money. Believer or agnostic, educated or ignorant, conservative or liberal, the actual dimension of our salary, possessions, equity, and monetary power are as difficult to deal with as our sex lives.

I was baptized in a river down South as a teenager. And there was a custom in some places to baptize, along with people, their wallets and pocketbooks to indicate that not only the person but the possessions were at the service of the new life. Although the officiating minister would be surprised to hear it, he shared one essential vision with Karl Marx. They both knew that people don't stop at the end of their skin; they extend far beyond that. They stop, symbolically, at the end of their power and, according to Marx, at the end of their monetary power.

So it is not altogether foolish and mystical to speak of monsters and giants in this world. For in the land of material power there are various sizes and extraordinary distortions.

The Declaration of Independence, then—like the Bible, the plays of Sophocles and the music of Mozart—came from a time when at least these three profound and revolutionary insights into the human condition were unknown. Why, then, should we revere or think we still can learn from that

Declaration, which emerged from such a different climate? Because not to learn from it is to be guilty of the worst sin of all—the sin of arrogance.

Reinhold Niebuhr once said that each person secretly thinks he/she is the end-product of evolution—what God was really trying to accomplish all this time. But surely 200 years from now (we hope!) people will look back at us and, if they are generous, say, "Well, they *were* kind of touching, but think of all they didn't know."

It is precisely the ardent passion for freedom that blazed through even the finite assumptions of the Founding Fathers that makes the Declaration of Independence still so striking and so powerful.

Now, at the risk of sounding a little sentimental and zealous, I want to say that I believe the United States is finally more than a parcel of land with some people on it. I believe that we can admit and feel shame for every outrageous, mercenary, self-aggrandizing, blindly arrogant thing this country has done and still find in the beginnings and the life-stream of this nation more than a geography and more than literal historical events.

I believe in the American dream. I believe that it is bigger than my concept of it. I believe that when the first patriots wrote "All men are created equal," "Congress shall make no law . . . prohibiting the free exercise [of religion]," and "there shall be no abridgement of freedom of the press" and "the right of the people peaceably to assemble," they brought into being realities far beyond even the ones they envisioned.

And there is this fact: Those patriots risked their lives for the size dream they had. We talk glibly of far bigger dreams but seldom risk anything for them. Who will be judged more harshly?

I believe that dream still has the possibility of happening—for a black child in Harlem, a towhead in Appalachia and a little girl in Nebraska—and that the glory of it is that in this country it may happen to all of them in the same classroom or the same concert hall or the same laboratory or the same gymnasium or the same outdoor park at the same time.

I feel about the country a lot like I feel about the church. It gave me something, then it disillusioned me; but what it gave me was not destroyed. The God I believe in today is in many ways quite different from the one I believed in at eight years of age, but God still has the same name—and I learned that name from the church. The freedom I would work for today has many more and subtle dimensions than the freedom I learned about at eight years of age—but I know the name of freedom because of the history of this country.

Names, eventually, have a way of becoming very powerful. The name of freedom is finally more powerful, more revolutionary than even those first patriots—or we—can know. That is why I bow, without apology, to the Declaration of Independence.

AL CARMINES

Al Carmines, a minister of Judson Memorial Church, is well known to New York audiences as a playwright and composer. This article was originally given as a sermon at Judson earlier this year.

THIS MORNING'S MAIL brought me and many other Protestant clergy one more of the many suggested worship services for observing the nation's bicentennial that we are all receiving from the various national agencies supposed to produce such things. In this season of Lent in the bicentennial year of our nation's history, the focus of much of this projected worship has naturally been on how this is an appropriate time for national confession and repentance. And Lord knows we Americans have enough to repent of. Our history is littered with enough racism, sexism, imperialism, etc., to keep us supplied with litanies for several Lents to come.

But somewhere along the line I received one too many services of prophetic condemnation and confession. Why are so many of the churches in which most of the nation's elite—the so-called decision-makers—worship so fascinated with confession at this season?

I have been reminded of that perceptive historian Perry Miller's description of prophetic preaching as it developed among the second generation of American colonists in the 1670's and '80's:

> [The sermons] were releases from a grief and a sickness of soul which otherwise found no surcease. They were professions of a society that knew it was doing wrong, but could not help itself, because the wrong thing was also the right thing (*The New England Mind*, Vol. II, Cambridge: 1953, p. 51).

In other words, although these sermons of prophecy and condemnation always called for repentance, no one—including the preachers—expected anyone to repent. Rather, for these later Puritans the so-called jeremiad sermon provided a finely developed ritual of humiliation so that they could show their respect for their predecessors' values and at the same time go on with their important business of developing an aggressive capitalism that would soon result in their famous triangle trade of slaves, molasses and rum. And as the trade developed, the ships' captains, along with the rest of their community, could still take time for the annual ritual of humiliation, confessing how bad they were for such changes while they went on making them.

When Gerald Ford attends his church this spring, he will hear—if they use the proposed Episcopal

Te Deum for the Bicentennial—prayers for liberty in the nation, for social justice, for peace and for God's mercy. When the rest of the nation's leaders attend their own Presbyterian, Congregational or whatever churches, their own national denominational agencies will have provided similar prayers.

But what is the function of these prayers? Do we really expect any of the executives of the White House or the CIA or Lockheed or Gulf to emerge from them with a resolve to change their lives and their practices so that they will stop doing the things they have been confessing? Or could it be that we have developed another ritual of humiliation, a way of paying requisite homage to past ideals so that we can all go on a little more comfortably "moving with the times"—when we all know that the times don't really leave much room for liberty or peace and that, as several politicians will remind us over the summer, we can't really afford social justice any more?

It may well be that by regular confession in this bicentennial year of 1976 "we [will] have worshipped the power and wealth . . . and often abused and oppressed those weaker than ourselves," and that we are preparing, in this election year of 1976, to choose new leaders to help us continue the same practices. It would not be the first time.

JAMES W. FRASER

James W. Fraser, Minister of Education at the Church of the Covenant in Boston, is working, under the auspices of Auburn Theological Seminary, with local churches studying their own history as part of their bicentennial celebrations.

WHAT NEXT — cont. from page 27

We need to affirm that our concern is that the Christian Church has fallen short of its responsibility to meet the needs of all persons, as commanded by Christ. Further, we need to affirm that we will continue to challenge THE CHURCH in all aspects wherein we feel directed by our adherence to the teachings of Jesus Christ that it is our Christian responsibility to reach out to the world for the salvation of souls.

If, in this affirmation of our belief, a judgment appears to be inherent, it is meet and right for it to be. Further, it is important that in seeking "justice for all," we do not forecast our own doom by restricting our affirmation to narrow confines. There is more than the gay-straight issue involved. We must go beyond an outreach to any single segment of society! We must continue to challenge Christendom to heed Christ's invitation: "Come unto me all..." in practice as well as lip service. We need to point out to our sisters and brothers who label and condemn that perhaps like St. Peter, they need a vision to enlighten them.

Finally, we dare not discriminate; for if we do, we are doing what Tillich says: "negating the negation of love." Christ taught us that God's love is unconditional — ours can be no less. Our task is no less than that of the Apostles if this FELLOWSHIP is indeed Universal!

THE PROPHET — cont. from page 3

Rev. Roy Birchard and Adam DeBaugh, following in the path outlined by the Lord Jesus Himself in Luke 4: "proclaim liberty . . . to set the captives free" as they proclaim liberation in the land.

Rev. Joan Johnson in the extensive life-saving and soul-saving work of the innovative ministries — to the aging, to the alcoholic, to the handicapped — brings glory to God and credit to this Fellowship — a church which opens its eyes, its heart, its hands in service to all people.

Rev. Michael England in the campus ministry; Rev. Jose Mojica and Fernando Martinez in Spanish Speaking ministry, Rev. Joseph Gilbert in a wide variety of ministries, along with many many others, give further proof that this Fellowship is not myopic. Our vision reaches far. Our service reaches ever outward to the People of God.

Surely it is a sign that God has not only inspired a prophet to bring us together, but has guided this remnant of God's people by God's own Spirit to serve all people.

The Holy Spirit has guided this Fellowship not only to take in all the rejected, the disowned, the neglected, and the oppressed, but to recognize the validity of divers forms of ministry to them.

EL PROPHETA — cont. from page 3

Fellowship) como un grupo, tiene una diversidad ministerios para construir el cuerpo de Cristo.

Rev. Larry Bernier tiene un ministerio de Arte, y exquisitamente presenta las palabras y testimonios de las personas seguidoras de Dios, en las paginas de IN UNITY, el libro de himnos etc.

Rev. Jeff Pulling (con Karen Wheeler y muchos otros) tiene el ministerio valido de la palabra y de la educacion de nuestros futuros ministros en el Instituto Teologico Samaritano.

El ministerio nacional de prision fue establecido por la Conferencia General para que sea un ministerio de la palabra, sacramento y servicio para mujeres y hombres en prisiones.

El Rev. Bud Bunce en su profunda dedicacion en servir a las personas de Dios en prision, juntamente con el Rev. Tere Roderick, el Rev. Bob Arthur, Norm Flowers y con la ayuda de muchos otros, trayendo su Hermandad a un ministerio valido en el nombre de Jesucristo.

El Rev. Roy Birchard y Adam DeBaugh, sigiuendo en el sendero senalado por el mismo Senor Jesucristo en Luka 4, "Proclamando libertad . . . para liberar a los cautivos" como ellos proclaman liberacion en la tierra.

El Rev. Joan Johnson en el extensivo trabajo de salvar vidas y salvar almas de los ministerios innovativos — de las personas mayores, las personas alcoholicas, y las personas incapacitadas, elevando gloria a Dios y credito a esta Hermanded — una Iglesia que abre sus ojos, su corazon, sus manos para servir a todas las personas.

El Rev. Michael England en el ministerio de las Universidades, el Rev. Jose Mojica y Fernando Martinez, en el ministerio de habla-Espanola, el Rev. Joseph Gilbert en una gran variedad de ministerios, juntamente con muchos otros, dando una extensiva prueba de que esta Hermandad no es miope. Nuestra vision abarca cada vez mas lejos. Nuestro servicio abarca a toda la gente de Dios.

Seguramente este es un signo de que Dios no solamente inspiro a un profeta para unirnos sino que tambien ha guiado este grupo olvidado de la gente de Dios por el propio Espiritu de Dios para servir a todas las personas.

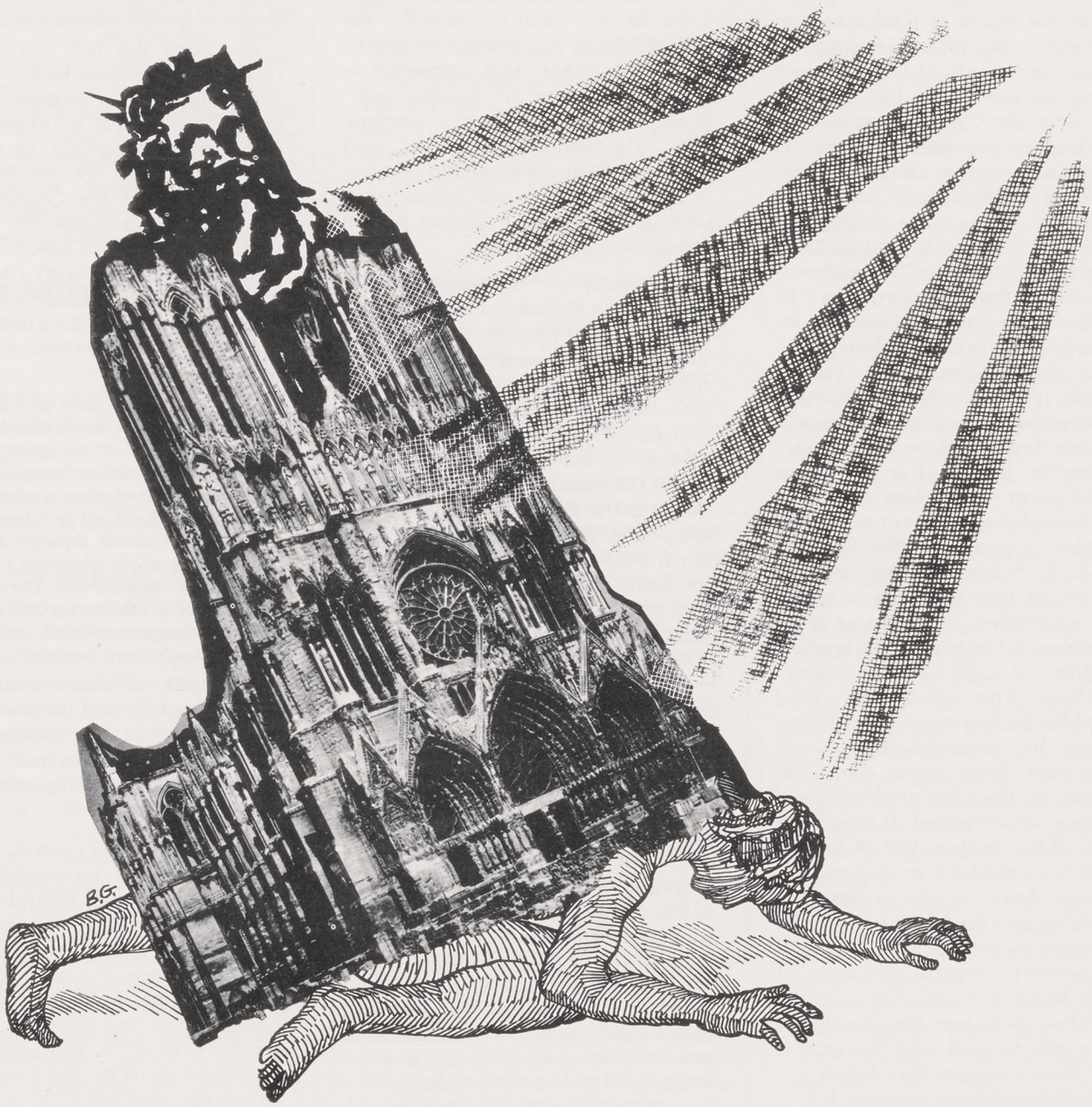
El Espiritu Santo ha guiado esta Hermandad, no solamente para recibir a todos los rechazados, todos los desherados, los olvidados y oprimidos, sino tambien reconocer que ha muchas formas diversas de servirlos a ellos en nuestro ministerio.

(Traducion por Miguel Llamas Avila, amante de el Editor.)

THE GAY CHRISTIAN

A journal of theological reflection from Metropolitan Community Church

mcc's mission and future



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AUGUST 1976

Understanding and Misunderstanding the Church

by THE EDITOR

JUST AS THE CHURCH is called to hear the Word of God afresh in every age — not preaching simply a composite of all that has gone before, but listening to the Spirit for itself — so the Church must seek to structure its life and organize its ministry in a manner congruent with the Gospel it preaches — not simply taking the shape of a composite picture of the institutionalized Church as it has always been known.

What has the New Testament to say about the order and ministry of this phenomenon called *Church*?

Or, more, precisely, called *Ekklesia*. It is a wholly secular word. Consistent with usual word choice in the New Testament on the subject of Church, it is not a cultic, or sacred, term. It derives from the root "to call," but in fact means an assembly of people. In the singular, says K. L. Schmidt, "the decisive point is not that someone or something assembles; it is who or what assembles."[1] The explicit or implicit modifier "of God" or "of Christ" specifies who or what. God assembles his/her own (Acts 20:28); and to this assembly belong all God's own. How many there are depends on the One who calls and on those who respond. It may be a matter of two or three (Mt 18:20).

Paul uses *ekklesia* as importantly as does Acts. Even so small a fellowship as a house church can be called *ekklesia* (1 Cor 14:4). There is no invisible, mystic *ekklesia* of which local congregations are a part. Though its true membership is known only to God, and though it is never an institution, the Church is a visible fellowship of persons. It is a fellowship in the profoundest sense. *Koinonia*, the New Testament's (and especially Paul's) word for fellowship, is an abstract from the verb, "to share with someone in something he has" or "to take part." It implies a participatory community.[2] Its members may be most aware of their membership when it is not assembled, but when each Christian is offering his/her life in servanthood.

The study of "ecclesiology" has moved to a consensus: the defining mark of the church lies beyond Word and Sacraments: in mission, the servanthood to God's mission in the world. The Church is not an end in itself. It exists, as its Lord, for others.[3] In the Church's life-for-the-world, the world may discern its own destiny. The Church's task is to find the points in the world where Christ is carrying out his/her struggle, and to make that struggle visible as a sign of God's purpose for the world, a sign of Christ's humanizing work.

No longer may the Church lord it over the world in the medieval sense. Now the Church can only be what its Lord intended: a servant of God's purpose in history, toward the goal of the new world of God's kingdom, the rule of love, justice, peace, and freedom. The Church is a movement; a pilgrim people engaged in an exodus. Where it often desires given continuities, it must expect, instead, change:

> What then are those "given continuities" that are provided for the church in its pilgrimage? The problem is that they have no fixed form. The church realized after the death and resurrection of Jesus that it could no longer center its life on a fixed temple of stones (or a fixed body of law, or a fixed body of doctrine, or a fixed cultus), because it is the living temple of Christ's moving presence.[4]

As Christ did not come as one dispensing pre-established answers, the bringer of a changeless eternal order, but rather as a full participant in history as a servant, so must the Church. It can be no less than blasphemy that the Church should serve as the bulwark for a dying social order. The Church must be free to move out with Christ into deep struggle, into God's future.

Williams asks a question so urgent no MCCer dare fail to consider it:

> We face now a time of institutional crisis. The ferment has reached the point where the level of recognition of the need for re-formation (renewal) is now becoming focused in on a question: Can the renewal that God is bringing to his church come about through a planned restructuring of the churches toward the missionary obedience that is now required, or is the inertia and resistance of present structures such that renewal can come only from outside?[5]

A church remotely aware of its identity, nature and purpose cannot be surprised at the appearance of new forms of Church, or at this turn of history, of the Metropolitan Community Churches.

Here, then, is my central thesis:

We who call ourselves Metropolitan Community Church are now presented with an occasion for momentous discovery. Our particular experience of life at this specific moment of history, interpreted with the help of biblical scholarship as it rediscovers the prophetic word of the Gospel, add up to the call of God to be the Church, to participate in the Spirit's

freeing, saving ministry at this turning-point of history.

Faithfulness to the call to be the Church requires faithfulness to the task of biblical interpretation. The New Testament offers no outline for institutional structure. It does offer, urgently, some principles for ordering the Church's life.

A remarkable discovery awaits anyone who would ask the New Testament its view of church order: It has no technical definition of what we are accustomed to call ecclesiastical office, even though it speaks freely by name of such office and functions within secular power structure and that of the Old Testament priesthood.

As will begin to appear below, the thematic term of the New Testament's choice is *diakonia*. It seems determined in its purpose avoidance of the technical conception of office current in religion and society. Its concerns are, rather, the building of community and its enrichment and enablement to minister through the gifts of the Spirit.

A STORYTELLING GLOSSARY

A consideration of biblical Church order requires an understanding of certain familiar words. As I introduce them, they tell a story — in four stages (1) Jewish and secular ideas, (2) Jesus' style of leadership from the Synoptics, (3) Charismatic ideas from Paul and John, and (4) Catholic/hierarchical ideas.

JEWISH AND SECULAR IDEAS

Hierarchy *(archē)*. Primacy or rank. So the Septuagint speaks of high priests and Egyptian court officials. The New Testament uses it for Jewish and Gentile authorities (*timē*). Honor and dignity in office. In New Testament, used only of the high priest (*telos*). Describes total power of office. Never used in this sense in NT.

Priest. A term that comes to us through the Latin *presbyter* from the Greek *presbuteros*, or elder (see below). But modern usage is not related to this meaning; it is derived instead from the Greek *hiereus*, and Latin *sacerdos* — someone whose principal function is offering sacrifice. The word "priest" is not used once anywhere in the New Testament for an officeholder in the Church. It is a title given to Old Testament Judaic dignitaries and to Gentile dignitaries. Jesus does not associate himself with the image of the priest, but rather is critical of the priestly caste. Under the new understanding of the New Testament, *all* are priests. Priests from the Jewish cult join themselves to the Church — and find no special status there.

Presbyter/Elder. The term *presbuteros* is used only negatively. In Mk 7:1-23 and Mt 15:1-20, the tradition taught by the Jewish elders is human and not divine in origin according to Jesus, who accepts neither the Torah nor the tradition as formal authorities, setting them all (Mk 7:6-13) in antithesis to "the command of God" (Mk 10:1-12 and 7:15).

JESUS' STYLE OF LEADERSHIP

Servanthood *(diakonia)*. Deaconate is a word in danger of mistranslation to mean an honor or new kind of rule. Yet every Greek would at once recognize in it only self abasement: waiting on tables, serving food and pouring wine — while the noble masters would lie at the table in their long robes. The first use of the word in the New Testament is consistent with this original sense (Lk 17:8). So the disciples are shocked by Jesus' action in John 13. The decisive passage is Lk 22:24f and parallels: "A dispute arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves." Principally this means that Jesus is the person for others (Mk 9:35, 10:43-45; Mt 20:26-28, Lk 8:3, Mk 15:41, Mt 24:45, Mk 9:33-35). In a broader sense, *diakoneo* (the verb) means "to be serviceable" (Mt 25: 42-44; 20:26-28; Mk 10:43-45).

Apostle. Always a person sent, with full authority. (It had this legal sense, and so necessarily excluded women, who had no legal competence!) It is a comprehensive term for bearers of the New Testament message, beginning with The Twelve.

CHARISMATIC IDEAS (IN THE PAULINE, JOHANNINE WRITINGS)

Charisma. A critically important term usually translated "gift," "spiritual gift," "free gift," "blessing," or in the special sense of Rom 12 and 1 Cor 12, the "spiritual gifts." The idea of charisma in Pauline and sub-Pauline thought expresses in exact terms the essence and scope of church ministry and function. Paul used the term technically as a critical response to other early Christian views about offices of ministry. An understanding of it must begin with Rom 6:33 — "The charisma of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Other charismata exist only because of this one. Käsemann[6] argues that this implies the gifts can be possessed only insofar as we are possessed by the Giver and Lord. We can only have *charis* (a related word usually translated *grace* but in Paul normally meaning power) to the extent Christ's Lordship is acting through us, making us serviceable in the sense of *diakonia*.

Charisma is used in relation to *pneumatika*, a technical term of Hellenism, where pneumatics included all the powers of miracle and ecstasy. Paul accepts the possibility of miracle and ecstasy; they may even be characteristic marks of the Christian community, since the Spirit is discovered in the most intimate depths of life where the presence of the divine is most surely encountered. The Spirit is the creative power of the coming and present Kingdom, experienced in the Christian community. But if Paul relates power and miracle to the Spirit, he makes a distinction between pneumatics and charismata. Antichrist can produce marvels too (2 Thess 2:9, Mk 13:22). Paul uses "pneumatic" when speaking of the enthusiasts, the fanatic-fringe at Corinth. Paul must recall them to earth from their fantasy-heaven.

The charismatics are pneumatics, but they are more. In the Christian community Paul substitutes charisma for pneumatic. The pneumatic enthusiasts were self-serving, fantasy-tripping. The charismatic was one who could say "Jesus is Lord;" that is, a charismatic recognizes and joyfully embraces the truth that a greater, unifying purpose of love

binds all being together and transcends every selfish interest, placing on us demands of loving service.

The mark of a true spiritual gift is that it edifies the community and helps people. According to 1 Cor 12ff the potentialities of the pneumatics are transformed into true gifts by the fact that they are given. "No spiritual endowment has value, rights or privileges on its own account," insists Käsemann. "It is validated only by the service it renders. . . . Heaven comes to earth when grace creates obedience and the acceptance of responsibility. . . ."[7]

And so, the spirits must be tested (2 Cor 11:13). No gift, not even that of an apostle, stands above the judgment of the community. The question: is it charismatic, or merely pneumatic? The catalog of gifts is endless. Paul cites those belonging to the ministry of the kerygma, the community service gifts of healing, caring for the poor, etc.; the administrative and pastoral gifts and technical forms of gifted service. "All things . . . are God's gift. All things stand within the charismatic possibility. . . ."[8] 1 Cor 7:7 announces that "everyone has his/her charisma from God."

Prophet. After Pentecost prophecy is the inspired speech of charismatic preaching through which God's saving purpose is made known. The prophets know something of the divine mysteries (1 Cor 13:2) and some aspects of the future (Acts 11:28, 21:10f). But more significantly, the prophet speaks out on contemporary issues. Whereas Old Testament prophets were few, New Testament prophets are numerous and include women (the word itself occurs 144 times, the most-used of the words under discussion).[9]

Apostle. In retrospect, apostles will later become the source of authority in the Church, and attempts will be made after their departure to validate ministries by seeking to show some direct ties with the central Twelve apostles. But in Paul the word applies to a wide group of missionaries, including Paul, who has difficulty gaining the recognition of the Twelve, whom he does not always wholly respect (Gal 1:1-2:14; 2 Corinthians). Rom 17:7 names two of the most obscure of the wider group.[10]

Pastor *(poimein)*. From the agricultural backdrop of the Bible, the shepherd. Ancient civilization had come to call kings and gods shepherds. Only once — in Eph 4:11 — are congregational leaders called shepherds, and the grammar shows that pastors and teachers formed a single category.

Teacher. This old technical term names a class whose ministry is tied to that of the pastor.

Administrator *(kubernesis)*. This charism's name comes from "helmsman," from the verb, "to steer a ship." In 1 Cor 12:28 it refers to the administrative "skipper" of a church. Says Brunner, "In the New Testament Ekklesia . . . the persons appointed to have control of the churches were marked out by the charisma of kybernesis, not by that of preaching or teaching. Persons of quite another order had the chief responsibility for the service of the Word: the apostles in the first instance, then the prophets, the teachers and the evangelists . . . ."[11]

Servanthood *(diakonia)*. As in the Gospels, *diakonos* still means servant. Paul uses the title for himself, as in 1 Cor 3:5, Eph 3:7, and Col 1:23. Paul, meanwhile, makes no reference to elders/presbyters. Not that there is no order here. Leaders were simply called diakonos, differentiated according to function in the church.

CATHOLIC/HIERARCHICAL IDEAS

(Luke-Acts and Pastoral Epistles)

Elder/Presbyter *(presbuteros)*. The dramatic contrast between the notions of Church order presented heretofore, and those described here, is nowhere more clearly signalled than in the changing use of this weighted word. In its base meaning it denotes age or maturity. It was used of political office, especially in Egypt and Sparta. The Egyptian political officials were, in fact, not generally old men. In the Septuagint it translates the Hebrew word for the Old Testament "elders" of the community — having once denoted clan and family heads, and coming to mean representatives of larger units until, in biblical times, they represented the whole people. Members of the Sanhedrin, too, were called Elders, as were scribes. According to Acts there were elders in the first Church in Jerusalem. This fact probably represents a less-than-serious taking over of the Jewish term as used in local synagogue structure in the contemporary Hellenistic Judaism, since it was a term already familiar. They do not appear in Acts until 11:30. In 12:17 James is first called the leader of the Jerusalem church. G. Bornkamm's study yields this conclusion: "The formation of a body of elders, first after the synagogal model, then . . . with the same claim as the sanhedrin, belongs only to the period of the increasing Judaising of the primitive community under James after the departure of Peter."[12]

The term is used also in the Pastorals. So far, "presbyter" and "elder" are simply two translations for the same office. These form a college, while *episkopos*, bishop, is always singular. The bishop appears in 1 Tim and Titus. By now the elders are no longer natural representatives of the community but a college of appointed leaders. The bishop now represents a monarchical trend, an administrative post. The development of a Presbyterial constitution under the influence of the synagogue of the Diaspora comes up in the post-apostolic writings.

Deacon *(diakonia)*. "Servant" has by now been transformed into an office, "deacon." At first deacons are coordinated with the office of bishop, as his servants — paralleling the Jewish synagogue. Their fuction was strictly cultic. The term had pagan cultic connections, but only indirectly, only as a cook for a cultic party. We are not told what the deacons did, only their qualifications. Deacons appear in Acts 15, but it must be recalled that Luke's sources for historical information were Judaizing Christian ones. His picture comes from a later era when there were no apostles — except as an ideal from the past.

It has often been supposed that Acts 6 depicts the origin of the diaconate. This is probably not so; and the noun is not used there. Acts 6 represents the rise of a Hellenistic office to counter Jewish control of the church — a Hellenistic Seven to parallel the Jewish Twelve.

Apostle. By the time of the composition of Acts, the Twelve, with Peter pre-eminent (2:37, 5:29)

are pictured almost as a college with the elders. The Acts phrase, "apostles and elders," should be read as a later projection of the apostolic ideal upon the elders, who were thought in the Jerusalem church to represent the apostolic presence. (Acts 15:2,4,6,22f; 16:4). In Acts, Paul is consistently denied the title "apostle," with one exception.

* * *

Now, our survey of the changing ideas about church order leaves us with a problem: How did the Church move from a charismatic-servanthood style of life to an institutional hierarchy? Is it development, or distortion?

Hans Küng argues that it is development, acknowledging only Catholic hierarchical structure. He sees no possibility for coexistence with other forms of church. His case focuses on what he views as the central dilemma facing Protestants: "Either to accept early Catholicism as an element of the New Testament and thereby definitely embark on the road to 'late Catholicism,' or else to reject early Catholicism as an element of the New Testament and correct the canon accordingly."[13] But that is simply the argument that because it happened, it was the will of God. It assumes a view of the "canon" never intended by biblical writers, to whom Scripture was alive, dynamic, and growing. Küng's reading of the New Testament is legalistic.

Some explanations for the change have been suggested. Historical evidence indicates that Paul's influence declined rapidly. He insisted on the priesthood of all believers, and that a special ministry is assigned to anyone who has received the Spirit. That view fell on difficult times with the rise of gnostic fanaticism. Sterner order seemed necessary. The church grasped for forms of government that had stood the test in Judaism and secular society, and had been tried in the Jewish Christianity in James' Jerusalem. There, the view was that the charismata are given with ecclesiastical office, dependent upon the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Now, it was possible to exercise control over the operations of the Spirit, who is bound to office, and freedom was surrendered to authority that could not be questioned.[14]

Further, it has been suggested that the nonappearance of the parousia, the expected coming in glory of the returning, triumphant Christ to establish God's Kingdom, forced Christians to a more stable order.

But nowhere so much as in the Johannine writings was such a "second coming" less expected. For Johannine Christians, the coming of the Kingdom was a spiritual experience presently available to the believer. In the same writings spirituality and mystic experience reach their height. And here, precisely in John, church order is the most anti-hierarchical. In John there isn't even any distinction of function. Something like a monarchical bishop appears in 3 John 9 — as an opponent of God!

Another explanation for the change is Brunner's: Institutionalism is produced by sacramentalism. With the rise of sacramentalism, great concern is focussed on appointing authoritative guardians of the sacrament — bishops, presbyters, elders — so it may be correctly celebrated. The Body of Christ is now no longer seen in the communion, or fellowship, of the people, but is increasingly identified with the elements of the holy meal.[15] This, in contrast to the New Testament, where not a word is said as to who may or may not baptize or administer the bread and wine in the meal.

There is simply no such authoritarian structure in the New Testament: "It knows no distinction between the active and the passive, between those who administer and those who are recipients. . . . This cult . . .knows nothing of the distinction between priests and laymen: its members are aware that they form a priesthood . . ."[16] Even 1 Peter (2:5,9) agrees.

It is clear that even within the New Testament period, at the same moment and in the same geographical area, there existed, side by side, radically different notions of church order. To which shall MCC turn for a model? How shall we structure our fellowship?

I shall leave the solution to those gifted with the charism of **kuberneisis** (see p. 4 above)! Whatever specific forms we shall choose, let them answer to these minimal requirements suggested by our study:

1. Accountability. Every ministry stands under the judgment of the whole community. Our ministry is shared koinonia. It must never be destroyed by unfaithfulness, incompetence, ignorance, selfserving fanaticism, or even inefficiency.
2. Flexibility. No form is sacred on its own account. UFMCC churches must be free to discover the meaning of their ministry and the presence of the spiritual gifts in their peculiarity, and to experiment. Creativity must never be stifled by law. Perhaps overworked ecclesiastical language should be avoided altogether. To flexibility we might add diversity and disdisposability!
3. Serviceability. The Church is defined by faithful service. It cannot be identified with any institution — so our administrative structures must serve and promote our ministry — in humility.
4. Community. The Church is, in its essence, a participation in the lives and ministries of one another, the sharing of faith, insight, experience, and caring. The Church must, therefore, be participatory.
5. Distinction of gifts. There must be no do-it-all "clergy" who carry on as though possessing the full catalog of charismata! A church must be about the business of discovering and nurturing the particular giftedness of its members. It must be organized so that there will be neither a power-elite nor power-by-default, but rather the power of the Spirit exercised through every member.

The Gay Christian hopes this study provokes thought, and the Editor welcomes responses. Or, your concrete proposals or concerns may be forwarded to your district representative to the Commission on Government, Structures, and Systems, listed in the May issue of *In Unity*.

NOTES

1. K. L. Schmidt, *ἐκκλησία*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* III. Edit Kittel, Trans Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.) p505.
2. F. Hauck, *κοινωνία*, *TDNT*, 797-809.
3. For a concise summary of the development of ecclesiological thought, see Colin Williams, *The*

Church. New Directions in Theology Today IV (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968).

4. Williams, 29.

5. Williams, 167f.

6. Ernst Käsemann, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament." *Essays on New Testament Themes*. Studies in Biblical Theology 41 (London: SCM, 1964).

7. Käsemann, "Ministry and Community," 67.

8. Käsemann, "Ministry and Community," 72.

9. See Kraemer, Rendtorff, Meyer, Friedrich, προφητης, *TDNT* I, 407-447.

11. Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (Philadelphia: 1953), 80.

12. G. Bornkamm, πρεσβξτερος, *TDNT* VI, 663.

13. Hans Küng, *Structures of the Church* (Camden, New Jersey, 1963), 156.

14. Brunner, *Misunderstanding*, 80ff; Käsemann, "Paul and Early Catholicism," *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 248; Edward Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*. Studies in Biblical Theology 32 (London: SCM, 1961), 85ff.

15. Brunner, 72ff, esp 76f.

16. Brunner, 61f.

FEEDBACK: letters & responses

More On Androgynous Sexuality

IN LAST ISSUE'S "Feedback," Keith Brown criticized the lack of "scholarly parlance" in *TGC* and the article "Androgynous Sexuality" (TGC, March '76). We think the points about scholarly standards in *TGC* are well taken. We think those about the article and the implied criticism of its author are not.

We reprinted Paul Barstow's "Androgynous Sexuality" as it was presented to MCC/Boston's Task Force on Sexuality and in that church's publication, *THE WAY*, because we believe its quality speaks for itself. Brown is correct: a careful presentation of a point of view deserves documentation. But the lack of scholarly apparatus is the fault of the editor, not of the author. Dr Barstow justly protests: "The editorial format (including appropriate scholarly apparatus) of pieces appearing in such a journal is the responsibility of the editor... At no time did you suggest any norm of 'scholarly parlance'..."

Finally, it should be noted that Mr Brown's image of one who would offer the arguments contained in "Androgynous Sexuality" doesn't match the facts. Barstow replies: "Irrelevant though it may be (certainly to the scholarly parlance Keith Brown advocates), the fact is that I do not happen to be 'a would-be gay tied down perhaps to a marriage he half believes in–who is working out on paper his problem of conscience...afraid to go the risk.' "

Citing the Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (with full bibliographic data!) definition of "truism" as "an undoubted or self-evident truth; esp: one too obvious or unimportant for mention," Barstow comments: "I am, of course, delighted if, in fact, my observations are truisms. After all, my purpose is to make them so."

THE EDITOR

Special thanks to Bruce Gerig and Jean Gralley of MCC-New York, artists who, beginning this issue, join TGC *and whose work is a credit to this journal. And to David Stryker of MCC-Boston, whose Xanadu Graphics assisted with the typesetting.*

THE GAY CHRISTIAN

A journal of theological reflection from Metropolitan Community Church

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ISSUES IN PREPARATION:
Ethics for Gay Christians
Women in the Church
MCC and the Charismatic Movement
Relationships and Holy Unions
The Holocaust and Gay Genocide

WHY NOT SUBSCRIBE TODAY?

Christian & Feminist

The Dilemma of New Consciousness and Old Theology

by JENNIE BULL

Jennie Bull is editor of Sharing, the publication of Metropolitan Community Church, Washington, DC.

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I HAVE BEEN a year writing this article; my hesitation and uncertainty stemming from the very dilemma any woman finds herself in today — to exist without an organized religion or to exist within a religion that oppresses women. Because my dilemma is not unlike that of many other women, I would like to share it,although other women's solutions may well be different. In fact, many of the ideas discussed here could also be applied from a gay or a Black perspective.

This article is written from the viewpoint of real choices now, from the viewpoint that no ideal solution exists in the present, and that women's decisions about religion depend on their own needs and backgrounds. In fact, the manner in which women deal with religion in their lives is not unlike the way we must deal with much else. The revolution is not here, so in the meantime what combination of the ideal and the real, of future desires and present needs, is best for each of us? And what do each of these choices have to offer the whole of society in a growth toward a better future?

THE CHOICES

First, the choices as I see them.

Ignore religion totally. That is what I did for several years when I first became involved in politics and the women's liberation movement. Depending on how much religion was a part of your life in the past, this can be natural or very painful. Also, it is natural to fulfill religious needs in other ways.

Substitute the women's movement for religion. Much of the structure of the women's movement contains things that are considered religious. In fact, "religion" at its root means "re-lig," a retying, a joining together, a reunifying, and this is certainly a central focus of the women's movement, which provides an overall framework of the way things work (much as Marxist dialectical materialism explains the way history works), as well as providing community and emotional support, an emotional together."

Exist within an established religion. This takes two forms: either participating in a group you grew up in or searching for a more meaningful religious group (such as a tanscendental meditation commune). In either group, growing frustrated as you try to change it, or compromising yourself by passively remaining within it because it is improtant to you and you do not want to lose it.

PURPOSES

The big mixup about religion is in the purposes it serves. Religion has served a variety of functions on this earth, and it is important to understand and separate out these various functions instead of lumping them all together.

At perhaps the most obvious level, religion has been a major force for the dominant power (or ruling class) to keep people in line. It fosters the prevailing social order, the necessary moral values — as Marx would say, the superstructure necessary for maintaining the economic system. In a similar way, earlier religions, even the matriarchal religions, inculcated a reverence necessary for maintenance of their social order. Throughout human history, religious changes can be seen as reflections of social and economic power changes. In this sense, religion is simply a power tool and an indicator of what is — the status quo.

In an emotional sense, religion is humanity's expression of a need for magic, for ritual, for that which is unexplainable outside oneself, and as such the variety of gods and goddesses and spirits in human history tell us something about what people fear, about what gives people comfort, and about the relative sense of power of a culture in relation to its environment.

At a basic level, religion expresses the way people understand the world to exist. Of course that view comes from a specific culture and that is where the bias comes in — but if we take for granted for a moment that there is a spirit, an overall purpose and creation to the universe — then we can seek, as the saying goes, to "let God be true though all men be liars."

And what is this truth, this spirit? For me, the spirit is *inclusive*, both male and female, beyond personhood to all of creation, including the heights of our deepest understanding of gynandry as a value of human perfection.[1] This spirit expresses the fullness of existence because it creates and is all of existence. Seeing God as a person, while relevant in understanding that of God in our relations as people, has been harmful in that we project our human limitations onto our conception of God. A God in which we "live, move and have our being" is a much more inclusive conception of the spirit.[2] Our obligation as human beings is twofold: 1) to find that expression of creation that speaks to us, within which we can grow, and 2) at the same time to be as inclusive as possible–to "re-lig," bring wholeness. To narrow a definition of the spirit is to narrow ourselves, to express our own limitations. Many women can speak of the evils Christianity has put upon women with its limited conception of God the Judge and Father.

In seeking to change what exists or to create a faith relevant to women, it is essental to keep in mind the spirit, the re-unifying core to what religion should be. This "re-lig" of a religion must talk about 1) our own personal wholeness and unity, as well as 2) social wholeness and unity, as both exist in 3) the wholeness of creation. If these central meanings are retained, then the rest (the ritual and the social purposes) can follow.. That ritual and purpose will change as we and society change, but the spirit will be a groundstone upon which to evaluate our lives and work, a focus for both personal and social wholeness.

PROCESS

In addition to the different purposes of religion, religion is also a *process*. Because religion is

social and cultural, having to do with groups of people, it is always a part of history and is always growing and changing as the reality of the human condition changes. In that sense, religion can be seen as changing through a dialectical process. For instance, an important aspect of the early books of the Old Testament is seeing the dialectical conflict between the Israelites and the surrounding matriarchal Canaanite culture. Many of the events in Exodus can be seen as a reaction to that religion and cultrure, fiercely clinging to a patriarchal Jehovah in defense of a predominant goddess worship. But as with all dialectical process, the reaction contains elements of that which it is reacting to–so the God "Elohim" in the Old Testament is a feminine principle taken from the surrounding culture. In later translations "Elohim" was suppressed (just as much of Jesus' feminist teaching was suppressed by Paul and the early church), but to deny the existence of feminist principles within the Judeo-Christian tradition is not to understand history and not to see the struggle between male and female religious forms that has always continued within various religions as well as in the rest of society.

The important point is that the dialectic continually leads to growth, to synthesis. We have a responsibility to carefully understand our Judeo-Christian roots, what they have to offer and what we can use from them as we find ourselves as whole persons and struggle to create whole social structures. As we know more of existence and of ourselves then our religion includes more of existence, becomes fuller. And that is what we must move toward, a process of growth and unity, through incorporation of opposites into synthesis.

The things I continue to find meaningful in Christianity are 1) a religion of grace, mercy and love, positing that not only are all people part of a natural order, but that grace and mercy are part of that order — a joining of the spiritual and the natural;3 and a religion that has historically incorporated reason, and thus provides the tools for questioning dogma of any kind.[4]

CHOOSING

Given the choices women have, given the different purposes of religion and the process of religion, how do women choose today?

Many women seem to be where I am today — realizing the spiritual needs they and other women have and feeling a need to act upon those needs. Some struggle within established churches (the Episcopal women priests), some work within more progressive religious groups (the Metropolitan Community Church at its best), and still others seek to pick up where the matriarchal religion of "the day before" left off and to create a new faith from woman's ancient roots. This last ideal can be very powerful, especially for those women who find no meaning in existing religious forms. And feminism itself meets many women's religious needs. Feminist emphasis on self-worth and self-love provides an understanding and acceptance of self that is shared with Eastern religions and even with the "God loves you" of Christianity. But because traditional religious institutions have acted so contraty to "Love thy neighbor as thyself," many women can only find belief in their own worth through feminism. On a more social level, the ritual of women's dances, consciousness-raising groups and female symbols all serve a religious function: Women's dances provide a collective ecstasy, confession and forgiveness can be considered equivalent to the soul-searching of the consciousness-raising process, and many women attach mystical significance to the moon and the cowrie shell.

Each choice has its drawbacks. To ignore religion completely is something few can do. Even when other things are substituted, there are often gaps of feeling, of disunity within a person, although for some women it may be the best choice.

For me, there had been much that was positive about my involvement in religion. As a minister's daughter and later as a Quaker, organized Christianity had deeply influenced my values and my concept of life — it was not something I could forget, and the antagonism toward Christianity that exists within many feminist groups leads many feminists to try to "forget."

The approach from within existing religion has its own more blatant problems. Sexism is the main one: sexism of religious theology, sexism of the institutional structure, sexism of language and sexism of the people. And yet those problems can be attacked, as in any other institution. There is much in Christian theoolgy that has nothing to do with patriarchy; services and prayers can be written to include both sexes; institutional structures can be challenged; individual men can struggle with their sexism. Because of my background, I have found this alternative good for me at present. I find much in traditional Christian worship meaningful; often enough it is possible for me to wade past sexist words and concepts and people to find value in what is being communicated underneath. And there are other benefits. Much of the alienation between the sexes comes from a self-hatred and insecurity in relation to other sex — they have power over us in our reaction to them. Of course there is much sexism to be angry about — but that is different from alienation and hatred. One of the good things about the Metropolitan Community Church is that I have learned how to deal with that alienation and therefore how to begin to better exist with myself and thus with men. MCC helps, of course, by the fact that gay men are sometimes less sexist than straight men. It is very possible to be a feminist, even a feminist separatist, and still have a friendly and working relationship with individual men. Getting out of my isolation with a small group of lesbian feminists has offered me a much better perspective on the realities of people and how they relate. MCC is dominated by white men, but there has always been a wide class variation, and it attempts to encourage women as

ministers and in leadership. In fact, I would say that racism, not sexism, is the biggest problem in most congregations. But MCC is trying to be open to struggling with improving attitudes, institution, language and even conception of God.

Feminists need to incorporate some of the things Christianity teaches — forgiveness and love here and now, for one. We are so wrapped up in changing ourselves and all around us that we often forget to be human with one another, to accept who we are and the world around us — in effect we play god with each other instead of understanding that we are each part of a much larger whole. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" and "Sisterhood is powerful" should mean the same thing.

CHALLENGES

Some basic challenges have been brought to the front by feminism and must be met: the challenges that result from creating a stable and fulfilling institution that speaks to women within a society and within personal needs that are formed by male institutions. The loneliness, isolation and uncertainty for a feminist that accompanies being outside organized tradition is often exactly counter to a woman's immediate needs, frequently leading to masochism and guilt. The reality of loneliness when the goal is wholeness can be hard to accept.

The concept of tradition is important here. Traditions of themselves can often be good, supportive and fulfilling, although we well know they can also often be oppressive. Feminists desperately need traditions as part of that ritual that gives meaning to life — and most often those symbols and traditions can be found within our past.

Another challenge is the development of a theology of power, a view of power, not as "power-*over*," but as self — completion, self — love that seeks to unify others, a sense of social responsibility.

Traditional religion is often used as a personal escape from social responsibility, as a personal salvation rather than a "Thy kingdom come on earth." One of the functions religion is challenged to serve is a combining of that personal and social growth and unity. The current emphasis on spirituality within feminism, while an important recognition of those needs, can also tend to be a retreat from dealing with the world as it exists now. Being creatures of traditional religion and an individualistic society, women must consciously avoid using their energies to create feminist religious forms as an avoidance of working for concrete social change.

Another important point is the difference between religon and spirituality. Many persons today are into spiritualism as a kind of individualized religion — between the individual and creation and not a group experience. While all people have such a spiritual aspect to them, to attempt to exist individually in such a manner is not only a harmful "I can do it by myself" attitude, but denies the social nature of existence and responsibility to the whole.

And finally, feminism must accept the challenge of not using religion to justify a position, not using religion the way society always has, to bolster a rational position by creating an unthinking dogmatic moral climate. I have no use for any religion as a tool as a consciously manipulated ideology to reinforce a group's goals. People are destroyed by such "beliefs," a climate in which it is easier to hate and to exclude (e.g. medieval witch hunts). The very words "woman's religion" speak of such a use — they have theirs (male Christianity) and we will create ours. Such an approach by its very nature is bound to limit and degrade those involved. To create wars between male and female gods and goddesses just because human males and females are often at war is to miss the whole point. The dialectic always leads to synthesis, and religon should give us the vision to see that synthesis. Women must commit themselves (both by working from within what exists and from without) to a spirit that is gynandrous, even though the real is often full of that conflict between male and female.

A theology of love is another challenge. There is much self-hatred in the way many of us as feminists try to break with our pasts. The process of examining our roots is often fruitful, but equally as often, because parts of our past are harmful we try to reject the whole thing, and in so doing we end up rejecting ourselves. Surely self-love is a major goal of feminism. Likewise, this self-hatred can be expressed as hatred of others, and the price of hating other human beings is loving oneself less. We must overcome hatred, understand how to use anger at oppression without letting hatred govern our souls. This is another challenge for feminism — a theology of righteous anger — speaking the truth without hating those that persecute you.

Some challenges, some choices, some ways of choosing; and in all there is growth, a chance for fuller personhood. To paraphrase a Quaker saying, "There is that of God in every person." It is therefore our God-given responsibility to find "that of God" in each of us, to act on it and to understand how our God-ness relates to the whole of God-given creation and our creating of heaven on earth.

1. I am purposely using "gynandry" instead of "androgyny" because the latter term is often coopted by men simply to mean feminizing of males, with no consideration of more power for women.

2. Mary Daly's conception of God as verb, see *Beyond God the Father*, speaks to that spirit for me.

3. I realize that one of the greatest evils of Christianity is a mind/body alienation (see Rosemary Reuther's *Liberation Theology*), but nevertheless there are Christian concepts that overcome that evil, that see the spiritual as part of the natural.

4. Again, much damage has been done by irrational dogmatism in Christianity, but nevertheless, reason has had a place (such as the Greek influence).

What is MCC's theological task? —two views

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1 by EDWARD T. HOUGEN

HOW ONE VIEWS our theological task directly grows out of how one understands the role and calling of MCC in terms of the major ways of understanding ourselves and our role within the Fellowship: One view holds that MCC is a church much like other churches, except that it is specially oriented to the needs of the gay community; needs which the mainline denominations have for the most part ignored. Such an understanding largely limits the theological task of the Fellowship to reinterpreting those teachings and traditions which have in the past been used as the basis for excluding gays from holding central roles in religious communities.

A second view holds that MCC is a church with a far wider and more historic role; that the mainline denominations' exclusion of gay persons is symptomatic of a profound misunderstanding and misappropriation of the Christian gospel and that God is calling and using men and women out of the gay community to initiate and spearhead a major reformation that will transform our world's understanding of Christian church and community. Adopting this position requires a reinterpretation and reevaluation of virtually all our traditions in light of our discovery of the radical nature of God's love and power; a discovery growing out of the gay experience of, on the one hand, rejection by the church and world, and on the other, acceptance by God and Christ.

Since I am inclined to the second view far more than the first, the rest of this brief paper will address itself to the theological task for the Fellowship that arises out of this understanding.

The task of MCC is to draw out the implications of the following two major religious in-

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TGC

sights: First, God's love is inclusive of all persons. The notion that there are good types of people and bad types of people, righteous and unrighteous, included and excluded, grows directly out of a religious understanding based upon the Law rather than the Spirit. This judgmental and estranging stance has plagued the church since its inception. Paul, in all his letters, again and again returns to the theme that legalistic codes, no matter how inspired, bring about death, though even he occasionally succumbed to the lure of establishing categories of good and bad kinds of people. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was triggered by Luther's rediscovery that God's love is not dependent upon "works," that is conforming to certain behavioral practices or rituals. The clear and uncompromising development of the inclusiveness and acceptance inherent in God's love for all persons in our day as well lies at the center of theological and ecclesiastical reform.

Second, to be Christian is to be real. For centuries, men and women have misunderstood the essential nature of church and community. Membership in the church for many has heretofore meant living out a double standard, where certain kinds of thoughts, feelings, behaviors were considered inappropriate or unseemly in church, where persons were encouraged to assume a "righteous" posture and exclude those aspects of themselves that were or appeared unloving, unattractive, or "unchristian." The gay experience of living in the closet has impressed upon us all at some level the destructive and unfaithful nature of public and private faces, of editing out "unacceptable" parts of who we are. True loving and true community can only develop in a context that allows and encourages all persons to be real, to be themselves. The development of the concept of Christian as real or authentic person rather than sanitized or censored being will have profound effects on our understanding and practice of Christian community.

2 by F. JAY DEACON

THAT THE FUTURE of theology should lie with those improbable peoples who know oppression and exclusion is consistent with the nature of the Gospel. Because we are who we are, and because we are here, now, UFMCC's theological calling is clear and inescapable.

A letter to *The Gay Christian* says, "The name of your publication completely boggles my mind! I am absolutely convinced that one cannot be both. Nevertheless, I was rather pleased to see that there apparently are those who disagree with me."

The writer, who has known herself to be Gay for the past 25 years, is faced with a hopeless contradiction. Hopeless, except for the radical essence of the Christian Gospel. An essence we are forced to touch, if we would fulfill our calling to put the words Gay and Christian together.

Others may be afforded the luxury of avoiding the radical essence of the Gospel and preaching, instead, convenient and popular (if outworn) forms couched in Christian language, but not connected to the power or truth of the Gospel. These forms have the advantage that the preacher need never experience the loneliness, the crisis or the violence associated with the preaching of Jesus and the prophets and reaction of the prevailing power structure to that preaching. But neither can they bear the liberating, saving power of the Kingdom of God. We ought not lament that we cannot be afforded the luxury.

The theological task of UFMCC – and in an even truer sense, of every interpreter of Christian faith – is a prophetic one.

Difficult as it is for an institution to be prophetic, we must spare no effort, be intimidated by no obstacle, to that end. For our very existence is prophetic. We live or die as a church according to our congruency with our prophetic essence.

The prophetic task is a critical task. The criterion of all genuinely prophetic criticism is the Old Testament and the witness of Jesus.

Prophetic criticism[1] views prevailing religious, societal and psychic forms from the standpoint of the Unconditioned which lies beyond them – the God who calls us beyond them.

Prophetic criticism of prevailing forms does not derive from simply another, ideal, form that can be used for a measurement of other forms. God, who is free and unconditioned, breaks through and shatters all forms.

I quote Tillich:

> **Criticism has its starting point in being and at the same time is directed against it. Its presupposition is the bifurcation of being into that which is in conformity with its essence and that which is estranged from its essence.**[2]

If our argument seems so far an exercise in convoluted abstraction, the prophetic criticism I urge ought not be so:

> **If the criticism that proceeds from what is beyond being and spirit is genuine criticism, that is, if it has the power of "dividing," then it must not proceed . . . *in abstracto*.**[3]

The unconditioned God who defies all our definitions and forms inspires symbols in our concrete world. New, ideal forms emerge that criticize, or bring into judgment, the form that is passing away.

Yet, we must not get hung up on form; no form is absolute.

If the prophetic task is a CRITICAL one, it is also a CREATIVE one. Yahweh inspires the prophet to say:

> **Remember not the former things nor consider the things of old. For behold, I purpose to do a new thing.**

Back, however, to that prob-

lem of abstraction. What is beyond and unconditioned – the source, center and end of our existence – must reach into the realm of life, and it does. It is symbolized in the earthy graphics of myth – a "heavy" word that we'll discuss a bit later on.

Any myth, and the metaphor that is theology, must never become hardened. It must continue to grow, evolve, emerge. Theology must never become a process of freeze-drying yesterday's symbols of the unconditioned.

MCC's task can be no easier than the prophetic task has ever been. Prophetic criticism meets resistance, because it threatens the security of prevailing forms and power structures. It threatens, too, those who, exhausted by the process of change, seek refuge in frozen forms representing another generation's perception of reality. Modern theology acknowledges what the prophetic tradition represents: an evolution of consciousness toward the symbolic representations of the unconditioned, toward the realization of the essence beyond all form.

Thus, prophets were stoned and persecuted. No one more pious or sincere than contemporary teachers of the Law could have called for the death of Jesus.

The need for prophetic criticism has not ceased. The Judeo-Christian tradition has too often been cited as authorization for acts whose lovelessness and destructiveness defy comprehension. Wholesale murder of ancient people at the hands of the ancient Jews was justified as ordered by Yahweh. Antisemitism, too, has roots in the New Testament and the ancient Church. The history of the Church includes so many manifestations of the worst hatred, ignorance and brutality known to humankind as to make the church the guiltiest source of the oppression of homosexual persons to this day.

In its essence, the Christian Gospel is the greatest potential source of human liberation and fulfillment. Yet, none of its interpreters has ever perfectly comprehended its essence and its implications. The time has come for Christians to exercise prophetic criticism and acknowledge that anti-homosexual, anti-feminine bias of interpreters from St. Paul through the Medieval Church to the Roman Catholic and Fundamentalist Churches of the present need not be the last word. Too many lives have been ruined and too much blood shed for it to be so.

Efforts at such reinterpretation can never be final or exhaustive. Thus, I do not favor the coining of a new creed. Such "hard-core" theology does as much for God, in Howard Moody's words, as "hard-core" porn does for love.

But, such efforts must be undertaken. A new and recommended example is John Yungblut's *Rediscovering the Christ*. He warns:

> Myth is the only language religion can speak to express the truth on which it is founded. A myth is . . . a metaphor, to reflect in outward and visible signs of written or spoken words an inward and spiritual grace. But the moment it is taken as literally true it may become a graven image, and professed belief in it may become an unrecognized form of idolatry.[5]

The truth is, powerful and formative myth continues to thrive in the human consciousness, and it is quite possible for meaningful mythic symbols to emerge from the Gay Community.

Fluid and flexible forms are congruent with the nature of religion:

> The very meaning of the word 'religion' springs from its derivation from the Latin verb *Religio* which is literally translated 'to bind into one bundle.' Your instinctive inclination to reject beliefs that cannot be bound into one bundle, made one harmonious whole, is to be trusted implicitly as the most profound 'religious' motivation. It is the God-implanted drive in you 'to get it all together.'[6]

"Getting it all together" must mean stimulating theological reflection that is congruent with the Gay experience. And it must mean seeing beyond the specific issues of any particular constituency. The Gospel must reach into human existence at every point. It cannot be divorced from issues related to the ecosphere, to minority oppression, to human relationships to ethics, to war and peace, or to any constituent of human experience.

The Gospel we preach must be prophetic, able to divide the real from the false. It must be creative, recognizing that God is about "new things" in his/her world. It must be the great good news of reconciling love.

[1] *P. Tillich, "Protestantism as a Critical and Creative Principle," in* Political Expectation *(New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. l0.*

[2] *Tillich, p 12.*
[3] *Tillich, p 12.*
[4] *Isa 43:18f, cf Rev 21:5*
[5] *Yungblut, p 8.*
[6] *Yungblut, p iv*

The two preceding articles were prepared for the Northeast District Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order last January in Brooklyn Heights, New York. At the 1975 General Conference, UFMCC's FFO Commission was charged with presenting the 1976 Conference with a report on UFMCC's theological task, cast in the form of responses to six questions. Watch THE GAY CHRISTIAN for FFO's answers.

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